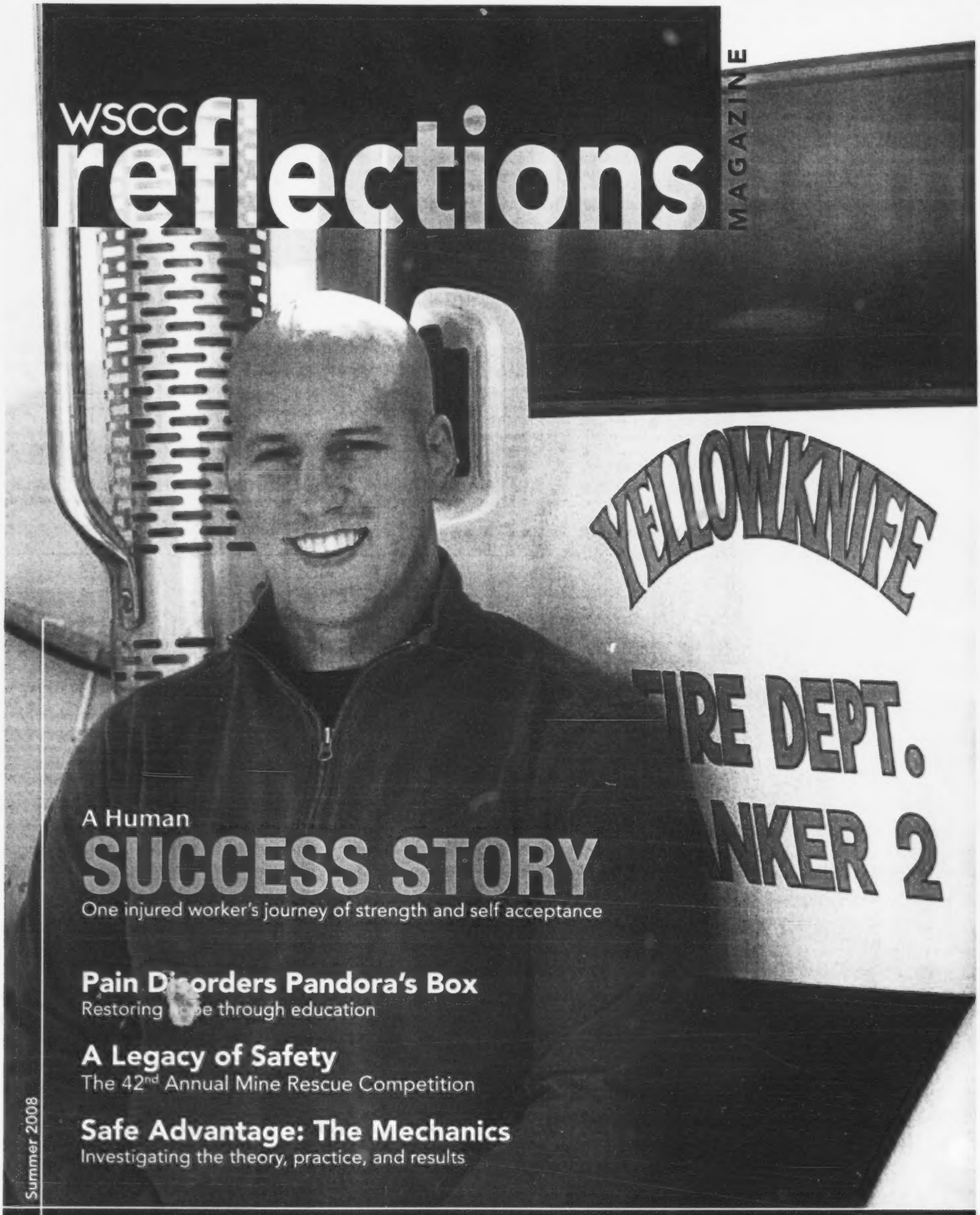
WSCC reflections MAGAZINE



A Human
SUCCESS STORY
One injured worker's journey of strength and self acceptance

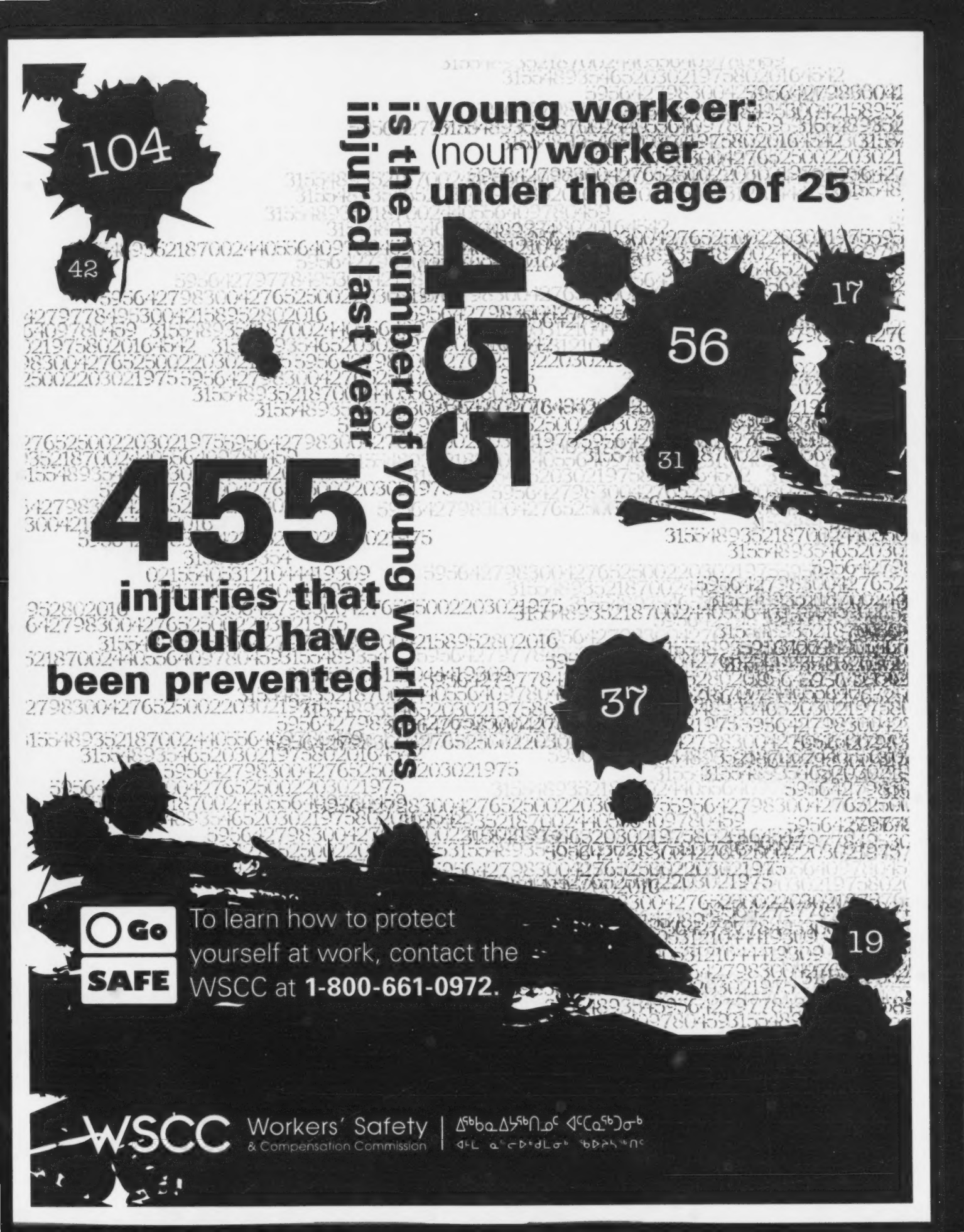
Pain Disorders Pandora's Box
Restoring hope through education

A Legacy of Safety
The 42nd Annual Mine Rescue Competition

Safe Advantage: The Mechanics
Investigating the theory, practice, and results

Summer 2008

Reflecting on **Safe Workplace Practices** Across the North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Go
SAFE
To learn how to protect
yourself at work, contact the
WSCC at 1-800-661-0972.
WSCC
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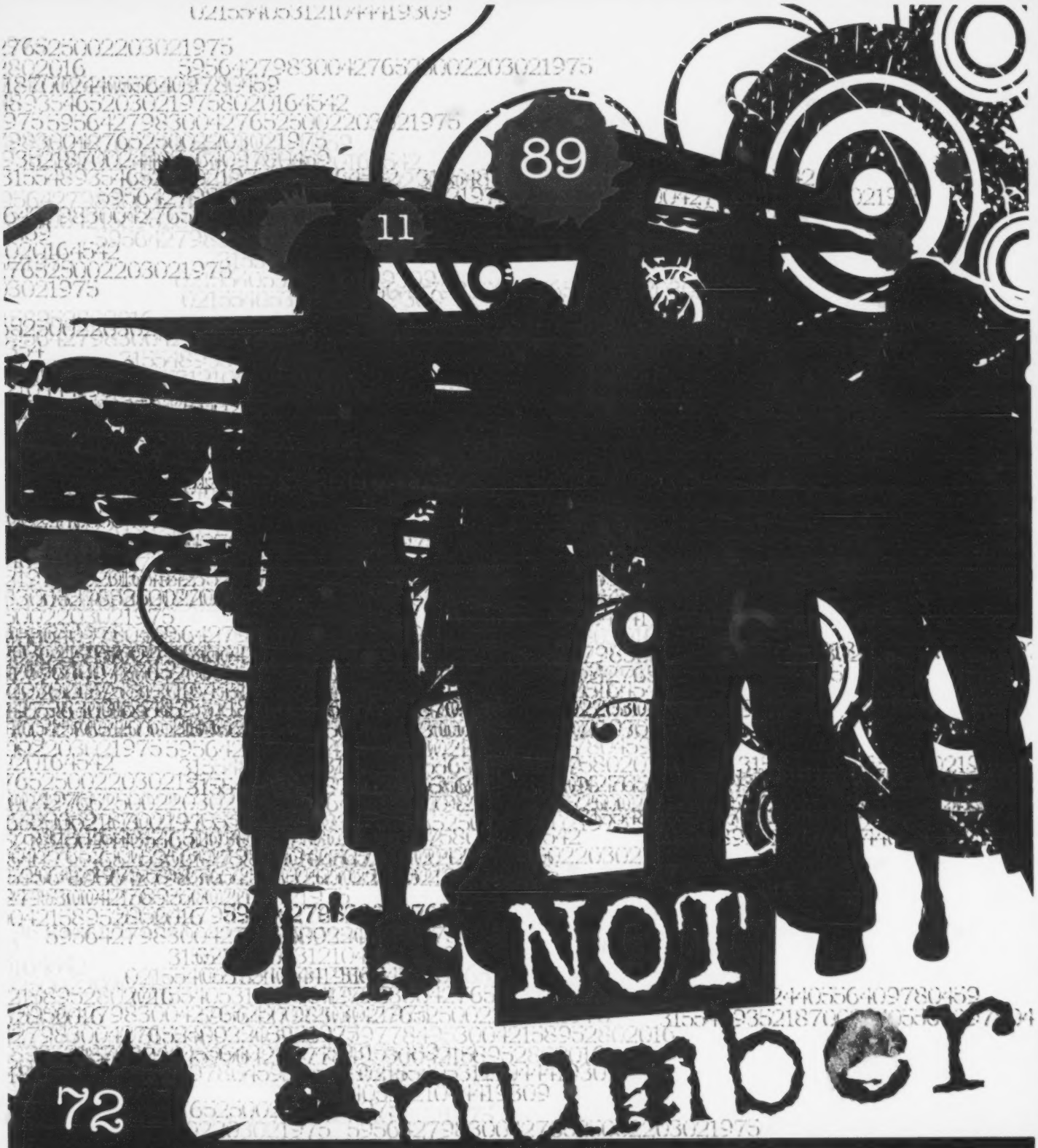

www.wcb.nt.ca 1.800.661.0792
www.wcbnunavut.ca 1.877.404.4407

455 is based on statistics for the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

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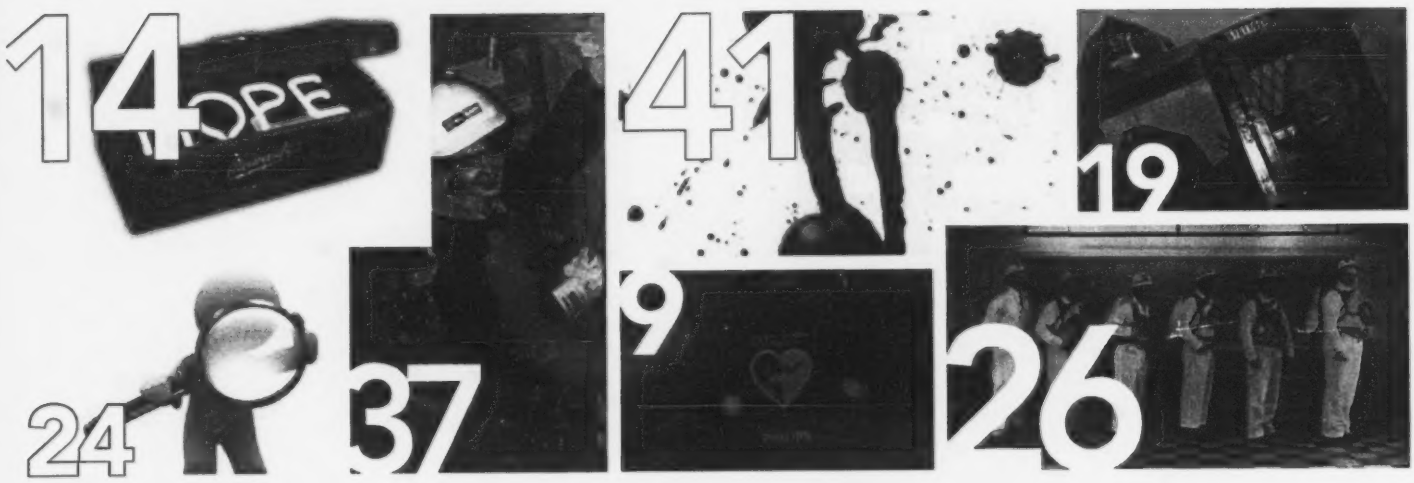

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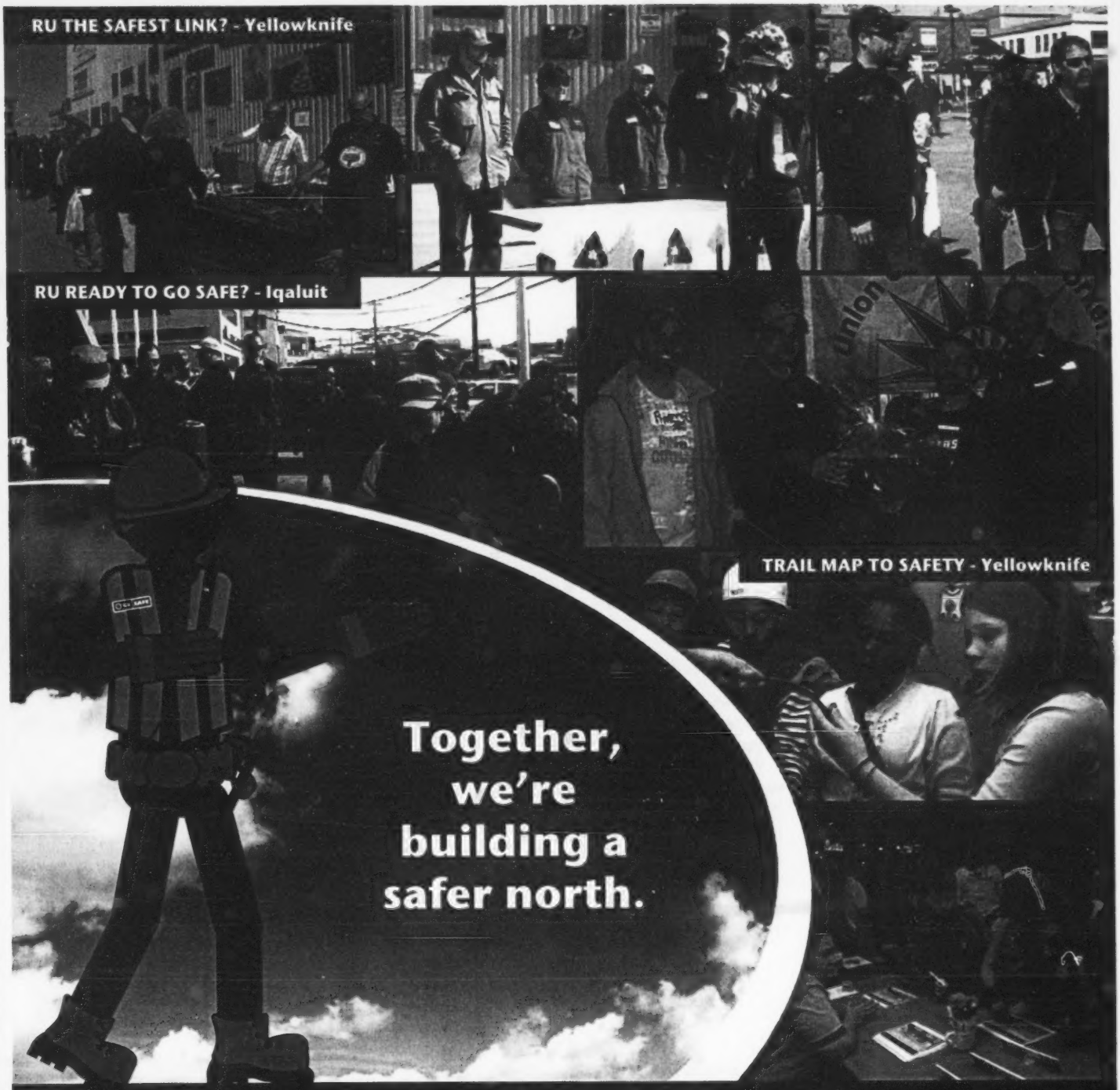

RU THE SAFEST LINK? - Yellowknife
RU READY TO GO SAFE? - Iqaluit
TRAIL MAP TO SAFETY - Yellowknife
Together, we're building a safer north.

Thank you to everyone who participated in North American Occupational Safety and Health Week. Your commitment to workplace health and safety is outstanding!

WSCC Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission | ᐃᖃᓗᐊᓕᕆᔨᒃᑯᓂᖅ ᐊᑕᐅᓯᖃᑐᓂᖅ ᐊᒻᒪ ᓇᓕᓕᒫᓂᖅ ᖃᐅᔨᓴᓕᖅᑎᑦ

Go SAFE

EDITOR'S LETTER

It's summer time. Regardless of the season, the North is a unique place to live and work. Opportunities are booming, the landscape is beautiful, and beneath its harsh exterior lies great potential.

The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC) is committed to service excellence. We want to work with you, the employers and workers of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, to minimize challenges and maximize opportunity by building strong partnerships to improve workplace safety standards across the North.

Anne S. Clark

Reflections is not just a magazine. It is a safety resource and tool designed with you in mind. It presents us with a unique opportunity to open the lines of communication and to share information. Each issue we evaluate your feedback, examine our services, and try to find topics relevant to safety and prevention in the North.

This issue includes articles on: a young worker's return-to-work after a near fatal injury; a history of the Mine Rescue Competition and the role it plays in workplace safety; and, clear answers to tough questions like, how to refuse unsafe work.

I encourage you to take advantage of everything the North has to offer. We see great potential in northern workplaces and believe together we can eliminate workplace injuries and illnesses.

Anne S. Clark
President & CEO

GOVERNANCE COUNCIL

Denny Rodgers, Chairperson

Denny Rodgers of Inuvik was first appointed Chairperson of the Governance Council on October 13, 2005 for a two-year term. Having served as a public interest representative since May 2003, Denny held the positions of Chairperson of the Finance and Audit Committee, Vice Chairperson of the Council, and Acting Chairperson of the Governance Council from May 1, 2005, until his formal appointment to Chairperson. Mr. Rodgers was reappointed Chairperson for a two-year term in November 2007.

J.B. MacDonald, Director,
Labour Representative

J.B. (Ben) MacDonald of Yellowknife was appointed to the Governance Council as a Labour Representative effective April 1, 2008, for a three-year term.

Bill Aho, Director, Employer Representative

Bill Aho of Yellowknife was appointed to the Governance Council as an Employer Representative on May 1, 2004 for a two-year term. Mr. Aho was reappointed for a two-year term in May 2006, and again in May 2008.

Karin McDonald, Director,
Employer Representative

Karin McDonald of Inuvik was appointed to the Governance Council as an Employer Representative on October 15, 2004 for a three-term. In November 2007, Ms. McDonald was reappointed for a two-year term.

George Kuksuk, Director,
Public Interest Representative

George Kuksuk of Arviat was appointed to the position of Public Interest Representative on May 31, 2004. Mr. Kuksuk was reappointed in June 2007, for a three-year term.

Fred Koe, Director,
Public Interest Representative

Fred Koe of Yellowknife was appointed to the Governance Council as a Public Interest Representative on February 1, 2007, for a three-year term.

For more information on any of our Governance Council members please visit our website at www.wcb.nt.ca or www.wcbnunavut.ca.

Did we DELIVER?

The Mission of the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC) is clear – *promote workplace safety and care for injured workers. Reflections* plays a big part in getting the job done.

We want to hear from you – good or bad. If *Reflections* inspires you, encourages you, gives you insight into how the WSCC works, or just gets you thinking about the importance of workplace safety, please let us know.

Send your comments and/or questions to:

Reflections
Box 8888
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2R3
E-mail: reflections@wcb.nt.ca

WHAT YOU HAD TO SAY:

What a great way to start a week by reading through the new edition of Reflections. Extremely informative as to how things are done in the North, i.e. Life & Limb, Ice Harvest. Very refreshing and enjoyable to read through these articles. Keep 'em coming and remember to "Create a Culture Where Safety is a way of Life". - **Gerry Walker,** Safety Manager, Works Alberta Ltd.

Thank you very much for the copy of the Reflections Magazine Winter 2008. I am enjoying the material inside and look forward to receiving them as they are published. Please continue to send me a copy or more as you wish.

Further, do you have any workers compensation material that I can utilize for not only myself but my employees as well? i.e. safety related pamphlets, mags, posters, stickers, etc? If so, would it be at all possible to have some sent to me as well? Thank you very much in advance and for your time. Have a great day! - **John Henderson**

WSCC Reply: The WSCC loves getting requests for more safety information. It shows your commitment to building a stronger safety culture throughout the North. Working together, we can make sure all northerners get the message of the importance of workplace safety.

The WSCC produces all kinds of helpful resource materials. From posters to stickers to an interactive safety orientation computer game, the WSCC can provide you with the tools to spread your safety message.

If you would like us to send some safety stuff your way, email reflections@wcb.nt.ca or call 1-800-661-0792.

ARE YOU LAUNCH READY?

You wait all year for summer. Make sure it's a safe one.

BOATING CHECKLIST

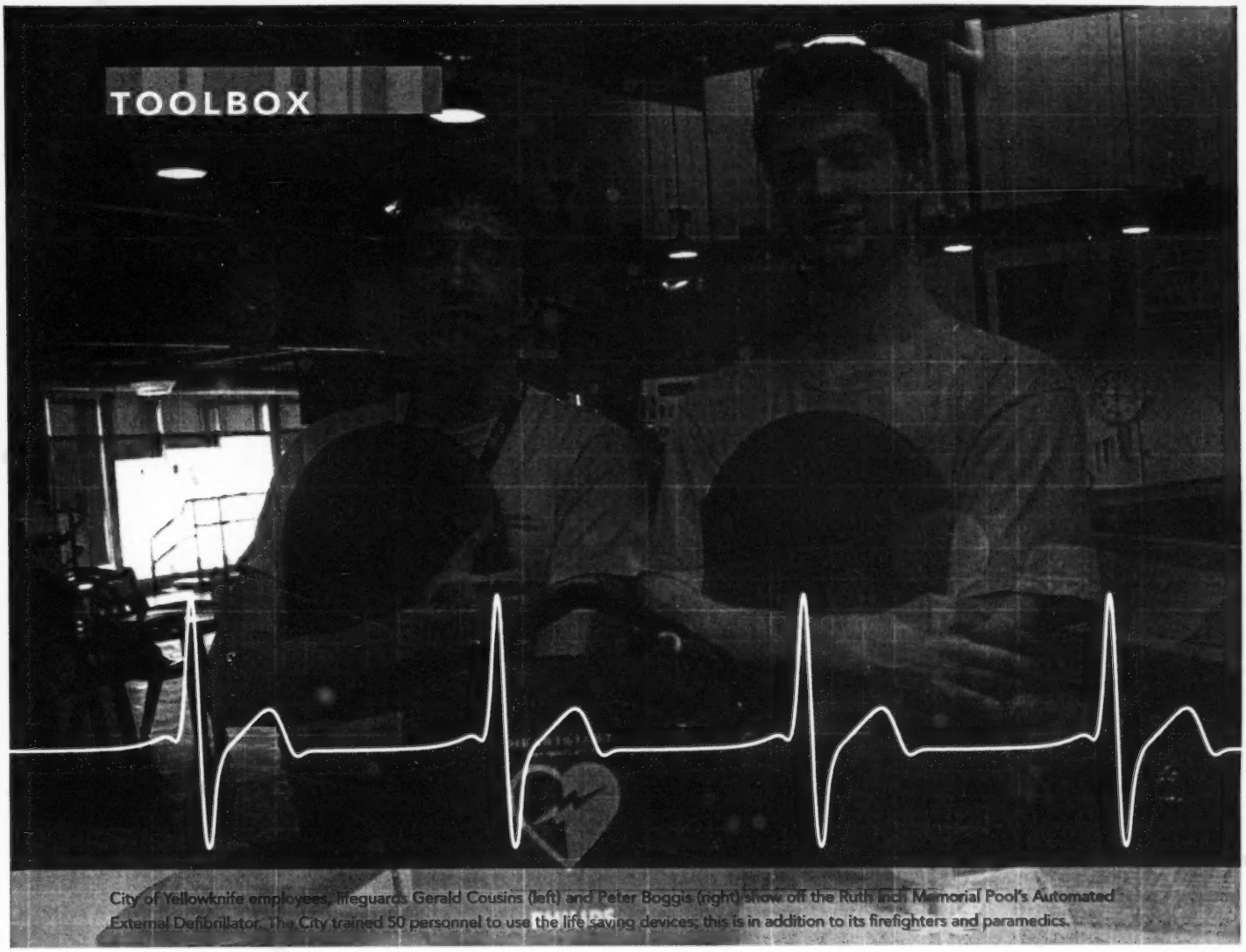
Before every boating trip take a few minutes and review this checklist sponsored by St. John Ambulance.

- ❑ Have you checked your boat for damage?
- ❑ Do you have current maps and charts for the area where you're boating?
- ❑ Are there enough approved lifejackets of appropriate size for everyone on board?
- ❑ Do you have a first aid kit and emergency repair kit on board?
- ❑ Have you told someone about the route you've planned, when you're departing, and when you expect to return?
- ❑ Is your radio working properly?
- ❑ What's the weather forecast?

St. John Ambulance

SAVING LIVES
at work, home and play

T: (867) 873-5658 F: (867) 920-4458
E: ykadmin@nt.sja.ca
www.sja.ca



City of Yellowknife employees, lifeguards Gerald Cousins (left) and Peter Boggis (right) show off the Ruth Inch Memorial Pool's Automated External Defibrillator. The City trained 50 personnel to use the life saving devices; this is in addition to its firefighters and paramedics.

ABCs to AEDs:

The lifesaver's three-letter revolution

Are you over 45? I know it's a personal question, but are you? Do you work with someone who is?

First aid and CPR training in workplaces has gradually become the norm since the three-letter life saving short form, ABC: Airway, Breathing, Circulation, was coined over thirty years ago. But as the majority of Canada's workforce ages... is knowing our ABCs enough?

Canadians suffer almost 40,000 cardiac arrests every year. Since 2000, Canadian workers' compensation boards accepted an annual average of 957 workplace fatality claims; and according to the American Heart Association 13% of cardiac arrest deaths are in the workplace. National statistics also show workplace fatalities steadily climbing by two to five percent per year. These facts were the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission's (WSCC) call to action.

"Implementing an internal AED program just makes sense," says Anne S. Clark, WSCC President & CEO. "It is a part of taking good care of our workers and making sure we have the

proper equipment to send workers home alive at the end of the day."

An AED, or Automated External Defibrillator, is a small, portable lunch box-shaped life saving tool. It often measures about one foot long and wide, and is about four inches tall. The AED, when used on the cardiac arrest casualty, measures the heart rhythm, or lack of, and delivers an electric shock if needed. The electric shock delivered by the AED acts as a reset button and allows the heart to establish a normal rhythm.

The WSCC trained eleven staff members as Medical First Responders to support both community events and workplace emergency situations. Part of this training was how to use an AED.

"We employ staff trained to deal with health and safety emergencies," adds Clark. "To continue our commitment as leaders in workplace safety, we will implement our own internal AED program to give our trained staff the proper tools to keep our workers safe."

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), 95% of people who suffer cardiac arrest in the workplace do not survive. So the AHA teamed up with the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute to find out if cardiac arrest casualties have better survival odds when an AED is used on them by a trained layperson. The AHA research project revealed incredible success. When an AED was used on a cardiac arrest casualty within three minutes of the onset of the heart attack, the survival rate increased to 74%, as compared to 50% after five minutes, and a measly 2% after 12 minutes. The average northern EMS response time seems to dance around the five minute mark depending on staffing, traffic, and community size and resources. This is pretty quick, but consider again the differences in survival rates of a person defibrillated in two minutes as compared to five minutes.

If anyone understands how crucial minutes are in a life saving situation; it is the City of Yellowknife. The City employs firefighters and lifeguards who respond to emergency situations regularly. After two cardiac arrests in their facilities, the City of Yellowknife decided it was time to lead by example.

"Some people were fearful of AED training," says Grant White, Director, Community Services. "But, once they saw how easy the AED was to use they were reassured." The City of Yellowknife installed AEDs in all major venues including; City Hall, the Multiplex, the Yellowknife Community Arena, the Ruth Inch Memorial Pool, and the Yellowknife Public Library. Over the program's two-year existence, the City trained 50 personnel, not including the 20 firefighters who already have advanced AED training, to use the devices in emergency situations.

AEDs are designed to only deliver a lifesaving electric shock to a heart trying to establish a normal rhythm. When heart attacks strike, the person's heart will often struggle to try and regain a usable rhythm. Because the AED can only jump start a heart with some kind of rhythm, getting the AED to the victim quickly is just as important as knowing CPR. CPR, chest compressions, paired with artificial respiration, is used between the AEDs electric shocks and is a rescuer's only life-saving tactic if the victim doesn't have a shock-worthy heart rhythm.

> ...95% of people who suffer cardiac arrest in the workplace do not survive.

"Initially, the idea of using an AED scared me, I didn't want to hurt anyone," says Danielle Walsh, WSCC employee and Medical First Responder. "But, I now understand that the AED does the hard work. It has voice prompts that guide you through step by step, it reads the rhythm of the heart, and knows when the heart needs help. It won't shock a heart that is beating properly."

So, will AEDs become as common as First Aid training and fire extinguishers in northern workplaces? With one out of every three Canadians falling into the 40 to 60 age group, implementing measures that help save the life of a co-worker seem like a good investment.

"We hope we never have to use them," concludes Clark. "But just in case, we're ready!" WSCC

DUE DILIGENCE

Bear Safety and Working in Remote Locations

"If you go out in the woods today, you're sure of a big surprise..."This old children's song, singing of teddy bears and their picnics can be very different from what workers in remote areas may face. If you have workers stationed in remote areas, there are actions you can take to help keep your workers safe.

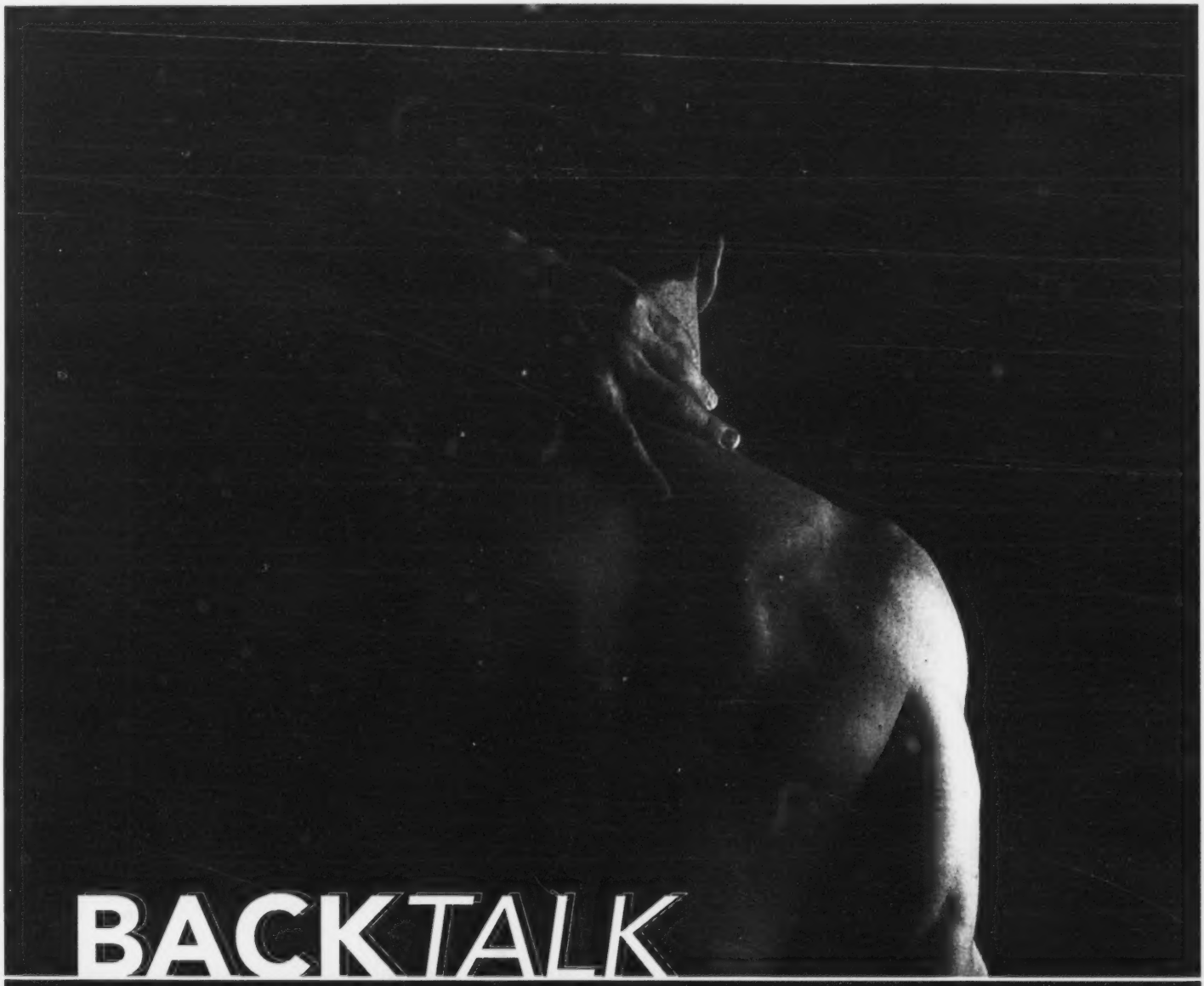
Incorporating bear awareness within your existing health and safety program is the first step. This awareness component should include information on bears, work procedures, education, and training to prepare your workers when there is a risk of a wildlife encounter.

Some topics on bears and bear awareness to include in your health and safety program are:

- ✓ Bear behaviour;
- ✓ Bear avoidance;
- ✓ How to control bears;
- ✓ Encounters with bears;
- ✓ How to survive attacks; and
- ✓ Camp safety.

When you share this information with your employees, make sure they get a written copy of the procedures for a reference while they are in the field. A sample bear training plan is available at http://www2.worksafebc.com/PDFs/petroleum/worker_training_bears.pdf.

It is your responsibility to ensure your workers understand and follow these procedures for bear avoidance and encounters. When you provide them with the tools to be safe, they will stay safe when you send them into remote locations. After all, everyone loves a great picnic but no one enjoys unexpected guests. WSCC



BACKTALK

Your back is one of the most important parts of your body. Your lower back is subjected to greater mechanical stress than any other part of your body. As a result, the back is often injured at work, ranging from simple strains that heal within six to eight weeks, to more severe injuries that require surgery, hospitalization, and extended periods of time off work.

Before your back becomes a victim and you are sidelined from work, take action to reduce your risk of injury. Maintaining good posture and changing your positions throughout the work day helps you avoid added back strain. By using proper lifting, bending, sitting, and carrying techniques, you are taking action to prevent injury.

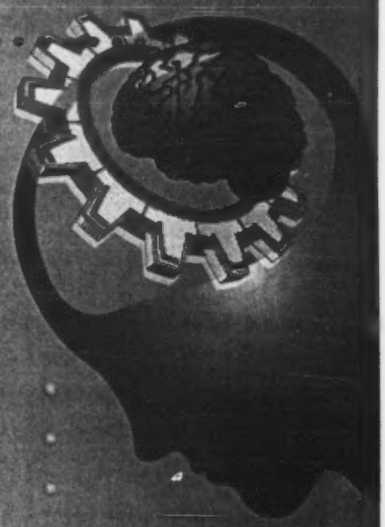
Keeping your back healthy also helps prevent injury at work. In fact, weak back muscles make you more likely to have an injury and make it harder to recover. By adding some basic back exercises to your fitness routine you're able to keep your back healthy.

Listen to your back; when you feel an ache or pain, it's your back muscles warning you that it's time to change what you're doing and give them a break. By listening you may avoid injury, keeping both you and your back happy and healthy.

Quick Back Facts:

- Back injuries are the number one cause of WSCC time loss claims.
- Averaging over 200 per year, back injuries represent 23% of time loss claims.
- 77% of time loss back injuries are caused by overexertion (pushing your body too far) - know your limits. WSCC

EDUCATING THE SAFETY CRAZE

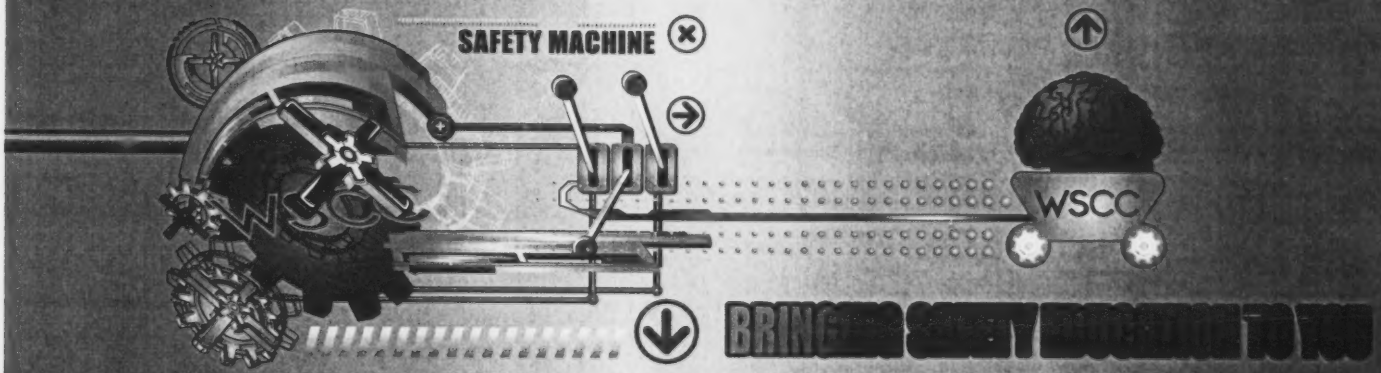


Get your **safety gears** rolling by making safety education a top priority.

The WSCC offers **FREE** safety education programs to employers and workers. Programs run throughout the year. Keep your eyes on local media for program dates and times or get clicking on www.wcb.nt.ca for more information.

Call 1-800-661-0792
AND SWITCH ON THE SAFETY MACHINE.

Find a current schedule of WSCC safety education programs at www.wcb.nt.ca.



BRING [illegible] TO YOU

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THE EVOLUTION OF THE PAIN DISORDERS

PANDORA'S BOX

According to Greek mythology, Pandora, the first woman, opened a jar now referred to as Pandora's Box. When Pandora opened the box, she released evils leaving only hope inside.

Medicine is an evolving science. We once thought cancer was caused by black bile; mental illness was treated with insane asylums, electro convulsive therapy, and lobotomies; and honey was a doctor approved female contraceptive. Times change, populations evolve, and the world of medicine gets bigger. This kind of growth is positive. But, what happens to people with health symptoms still unexplained or defined by the medical community? This is where policy analysts and medical advisors of workers' compensation boards across Canada found themselves and how the Pain Disorders Pandora's Box was finally opened, restoring hope.

Before 2003, many workers' compensation boards did not compensate injured workers for pain disorders caused by workplace injury. Case managers were bound by policies, policy writers were confined to medical opinions, and the medical community was deciding whether they could really

Photo: jungeart.com

rate an impairment and disability due to a diagnosed pain disorder.

The term pain disorder may seem common now, but it wasn't actually defined as a rateable impairment until 2002. A pain disorder is defined as a psychological disorder where an injury is perceived, but the original physical injury has healed. This definition was coined by the American Medical Association (AMA), a resource referenced by Canadian and US physicians for assessment of permanent impairments in relation to injuries and diseases. The AMA first published its pain disorders permanent impairment assessment rating method in the fifth edition of the *Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment* (AMA Guides) released in November 2002.

The AMA's addition of a permanent impairment rating schedule for pain disorders was published during the same period when the Courts were reviewing the case of *Martin* v. *Workers' Compensation Board (Nova Scotia)*. The *Martin* case challenged regulations and legislation that excluded workers with pain disorders, like Mr. Martin, from coverage under the Nova Scotia *Workers' Compensation Act*. The question the Supreme Court of Canada answered was whether the regulations and sections in the *Act* violated the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Charter)*. The Court decided the regulations and sections infringed the equality rights guaranteed in section 15(1) of the *Charter* and could not be considered "reasonable limits or justified in a free and democratic society."

Anne S. Clark, Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC) President & CEO, led the legal team who represented *Martin*, and over 300 other workers who were denied access to workers' compensation in Nova Scotia. She stated, "This case is a landmark in the history of workers' compensation. It made compensation boards across Canada reassess their understanding of psychological disorders related to workplace injuries."

Together, the AMA's decision to recognize pain disorders in the AMA Guides and the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling in favour of the excluded workers opened the Pain Disorders Pandora's Box. It took the WSCC four years to wade through available medical research and pain disorder analyses, and complete the consultation process to create an effective Pain Disorders Policy.

"Our staff started researching pain disorders following the AMA's first published definition," says Michael Triggs, WSCC Director, Legal Services. "It wasn't an easy task, but it was worth it because we now have a policy that works for all parties involved."

Through interjurisdictional research, consultation with health care professionals, and months of writing and rewriting, the WSCC and its Governance Council agreed on how it would define, measure, and compensate for pain disorders. The WSCC can award the highest maximum Permanent Medical Impairment (PMI) rating specific to pain disorders in Canada at 50%. The AMA Guides indicate a maximum permanent impairment rating of only 3%.

A pain disorder is defined as a **psychological disorder** where an injury is perceived, but the **original physical injury has healed.**

So, how did the WSCC determine its 50% maximum for the PMI rating? It didn't, its stakeholders did. The WSCC held stakeholder consultations to determine what northerners felt was fair compensation for workers with pain disorders. Through consultations with health care professionals and employer and worker stakeholders it was decided the 3% maximum rating in the AMA Guides was inadequate to support an injured worker, while 100% was too much. Stakeholders needed to find a percentage that was fair to the injured worker and sustainable by northern employers. Both sides agreed on a rating scale with a maximum permanent impairment rating of 50%.

To standardize pain disorder assessments and create an equitable compensation system, the WSCC developed an additional section in the NWT and Nunavut Permanent

Impairment Rating Guide. It assesses an injured worker's pain disorder severity by identifying how the pain disorder disrupts daily life. The chart was drafted under the guidance of the WSCC Governance Council and through discussions with medical professionals familiar with pain disorders, including the co-chairs responsible for the pain research used to develop the pain disorder rating section in the AMA Guides.

The Permanent Medical Impairment Chart is divided into five classes:

Class	Severity	Permanent Medical Impairment
Class 1	No Impairment/No Significant Disruption	0%
Class 2	Mild Impairment	1% to 7%
Class 3	Moderate Impairment	8% to 20%
Class 4	Marked Impairment	21% to 40%
Class 5	Extreme Impairment	41% to 50%

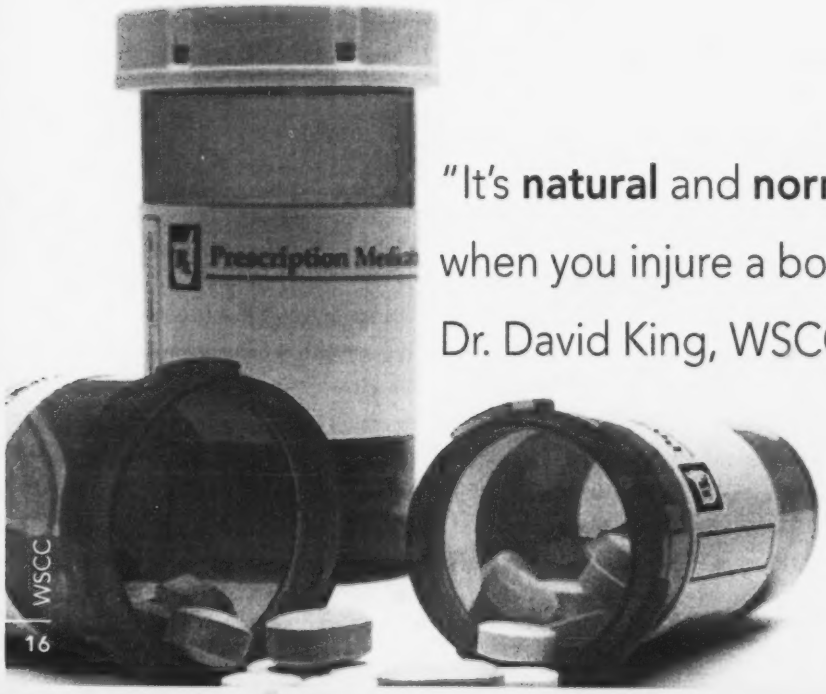
The classes use the following seven categories of human life function to assess the worker's permanent medical impairment:

1) Cognitive Function: memory, reasoning, language;
2) Affective State: mood or emotional state;
3) Physical/Vegetative Function: pain duration and intensity, sleep, sexual function, appetite;
4) Vocational Function: workplace function;
5) Relationships: interpersonal, marital;
6) Social/Recreational Function; and
7) Behaviour and Activities of Daily Living: self-care, communication, physical activities, travel.

Before the existence of the current Pain Disorders Policy, the NWT and Nunavut PMI Guide dismissed pain disorders as not having a rateable impairment: *Pain and suffering do not constitute a measurable impairment and therefore are not assigned a permanent impairment rating.*

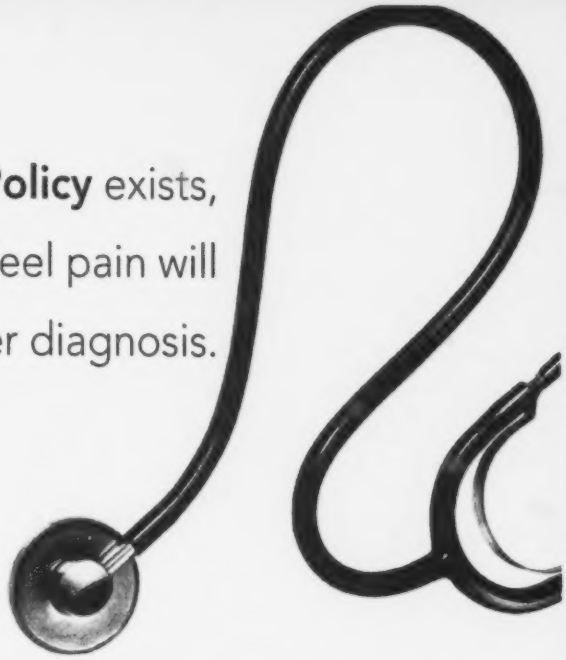
"There was nothing we could do," says WSCC Claims Services Case Manager, Michelle Currimbhoy. "We are bound by workers' compensation legislation and WSCC policies; if I can find a way to award compensation to an injured worker, I will do it, but providing compensation for pain wasn't an option back then. Now with the new policy, we can work with injured workers suffering through a pain disorder caused by a work injury," adds Currimbhoy. "I've had quite a few new claimants ask about the policy, and the WSCC has even awarded pensions to claimants whose files have been closed for a long time."

Although the Pain Disorders Policy exists, not all injured workers who feel pain will automatically receive a pain disorder diagnosis.



"It's **natural** and **normal** to **experience pain** when you injure a body part," explains Dr. David King, WSCC Chief Medical Advisor.

Although the **Pain Disorders Policy** exists, **not all injured workers** who feel pain will automatically receive a pain disorder diagnosis.



"It's natural and normal to experience pain when you injure a body part," explains Dr. David King, WSCC Chief Medical Advisor. "We are trying to identify injured workers who continue to experience pain once the physical injury has healed and they have completed all possible steps for a successful recovery."

For example, a worker who breaks an ankle is expected to recover within a time frame of six to eight weeks. If the time frame passes and the break heals, but the worker still feels pain, this is when pain disorder red flags start waving.

"We do our best to help people get rid of the pain first," says Dr. King. "We review the injury, examine and consult with the injured worker and specialists, and if the worker could potentially suffer from a pain disorder we would recommend an assessment by a pain clinic."

Following assessment, some workers may be recommended to attend a six to eight week program at a multi-disciplinary pain clinic, such as the OrionHealth Canmore Pain Clinic. Once an injured worker completes the pain clinic treatment the WSCC reviews the claim to determine a permanent medical impairment rating, which is used to establish the disability pension.

Although the Pain Disorders Policy was launched in April 2007, the WSCC still maintains thirty years of active and inactive claimant files. In an effort to fairly compensate workers suffering from pain disorders, the WSCC Governance Council made the policy retroactive to the date section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* came into force, April 17, 1985.

As a result of the new policy, 20 injured workers are currently in the process or have completed assessment for pain disorders. Of these 20 workers, nine were diagnosed with a pain disorder, completed treatment at a pain clinic, and were assigned a permanent disability pension. Four workers were determined not to have a pain disorder by the assessing pain clinic, and seven are currently undergoing treatment and assessments.

The WSCC Pain Disorders Policy (Policy 03.10) clearly outlines its commitment to all injured workers, regardless of physical injury: *the WSCC provides compensation benefits to workers who develop a pain disorder from a compensable work-related injury.*

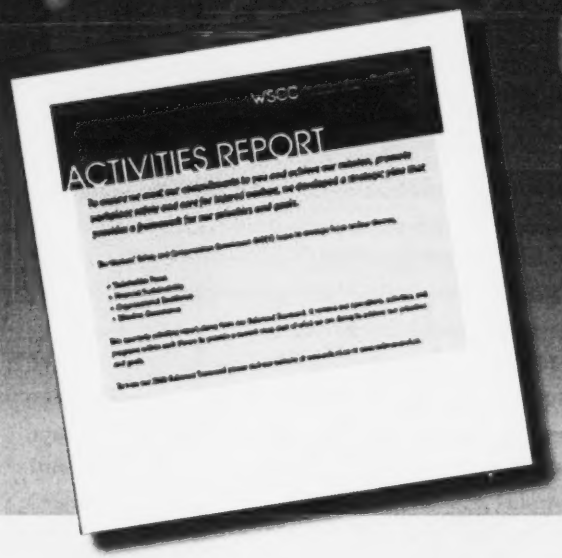
"I am proud of the strength of this policy," says Clark. "I have seen the entire evolution of pain disorders in Canada, from *Martin v. Workers' Compensation Board of (Nova Scotia)* to now. This policy is proof that times change, and we are ready to change with them." WSCC

Activities Report

To ensure we meet our commitments to you and achieve our mission, promote workplace safety and care for injured workers, we've introduced a new reporting tool, the Activities Report.

The quarterly Activities Report reviews operations, activities, and programs in the following areas:

- Stakeholder Focus
- Financial Stability
- Organizational Excellence
- Effective Governance



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WSCC Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission | ᐃᖃᓗᐊᕆᔨᖏᑦ ᐊᑕᐅᖃᑐᓂᒃ ᐊᓪᓚ ᓇᓕᐅᑦᓯᓚᐅᑦ ᖃᐅᔨᓴᖃᑎᒋᔭᐅᑦ

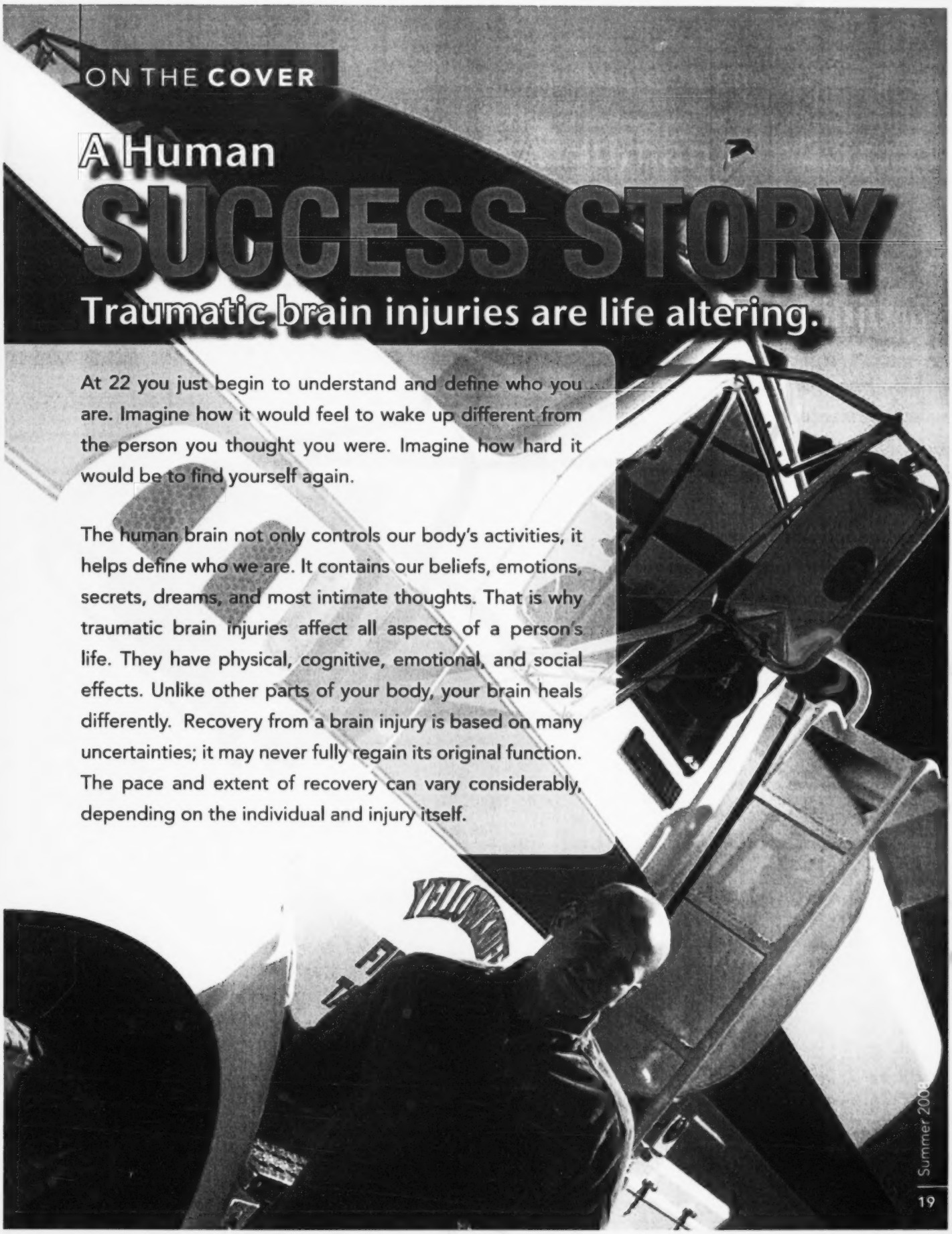
ON THE **COVER**

A Human SUCCESS STORY

Traumatic brain injuries are life altering.

At 22 you just begin to understand and define who you are. Imagine how it would feel to wake up different from the person you thought you were. Imagine how hard it would be to find yourself again.

The human brain not only controls our body's activities, it helps define who we are. It contains our beliefs, emotions, secrets, dreams, and most intimate thoughts. That is why traumatic brain injuries affect all aspects of a person's life. They have physical, cognitive, emotional, and social effects. Unlike other parts of your body, your brain heals differently. Recovery from a brain injury is based on many uncertainties; it may never fully regain its original function. The pace and extent of recovery can vary considerably, depending on the individual and injury itself.



No one understands the consequences of a traumatic brain injury better than Jamie Stringer. On August 15, 2002, Jamie was involved in a workplace incident. His life, from that day forward, has never been the same.

At 22, Jamie was an eager and diligent worker. He was young, but knew what he wanted. Jamie was in his second year of a Parts Technician apprenticeship program when a tire exploded and spun his life in a different direction.

While he was watching a co-worker repair a flat tire on a wheel loader, the tire exploded. The explosion caused the large tire ring to separate from the tire and wheel assembly. This 20 lb. ring was launched towards Jamie, and hit him with enough force to throw him back into another piece of machinery.

Jamie lost consciousness, and was in critical condition. He was medevaced from Yellowknife to the Royal Alec Hospital in Edmonton, AB, and treated for his multiple injuries; a traumatic closed head injury, a compound fracture to his left humerus, a dislocated left elbow, and fractured left radius and ulna.

During his time in hospital Jamie showed gradual improvement. After 15 days, he was transferred to the Stanton Territorial Hospital in Yellowknife, for continued care; after it was determined his injuries were no longer critical. He was discharged four days later, and began out-patient physiotherapy. Although Jamie spent just 19 days in the hospital, he began what would be a long road to recovery.

As a result of his traumatic closed head injury, Jamie suffered from balance impairments, retrograde and post traumatic amnesia, and personality changes. His broken bones would heal, but the effects of his brain injury would stay with him for the rest of his life.

Jamie still cannot remember the 24 hours prior to the incident, the incident itself, or the two weeks that followed in hospital. All Jamie knew of the incident was what others told him. "When I talk about the incident I feel like I am speaking about something I don't know a lot about," he says, "It's like I'm on the outside looking in." For Jamie, this is still a difficult concept to grasp.

In addition to his memory loss, close family and friends describe him as different than he was before the incident. He was more soft spoken, but easily irritated, and could be impulsive. He was not the Jamie, they thought they knew. Of all his injuries, his personality changes were the most difficult and challenging to deal with.

At the time, Jamie thought the descriptions of his new personality were gross exaggerations. He was in denial about the changes he underwent. The comments made Jamie question, "What is so different about me?" He believed he was fundamentally the same person. He had the same values and beliefs. "It troubles me," Jamie explains, "maybe I just don't remember enough to paint an accurate picture of who I was."

Jamie had to do some soul searching before he realized maybe he wasn't the same person. He learned traumatic head injuries often result in personality changes, even for those who have a good recovery. It was unfair to expect he would be the same after undergoing such a traumatic experience.

Jamie had to do some **soul searching** before he realized maybe he wasn't the same person. He learned **traumatic head injuries** often result in **personality changes,** even for those who have a "good recovery".

Eventually Jamie accepted himself for who he was; changes and all. He moved forward. Everyday, he notices things within himself that are different as a result of his injuries. He may never be the same person he was before the incident, but he won't let that stop him. "I do my best to embrace the changes. I stay positive."

When he first returned home from the hospital, Jamie relied on his family, especially his mother, for almost everything. The incident took away his independence. Like most young adults he took pride in his independence, and he found it difficult to rely on someone else for things he wanted to do on his own. Although Jamie was upset about his loss of independence, he later realized his family and friends were also a great source of support and comfort. "My family stood the ultimate test," he explains. "How do I begin to thank them?" Although they were always very close, they grew closer. Jamie wouldn't have it any other way.

Throughout his recovery Jamie was persistent. He made it known he would not spend his life in and out of a doctor's office. He was going back to work. He was cleared for graduated return to work, and began light duties on January 1, 2003. It was a small but significant step. Jamie recalls feeling like he needed to redeem himself to his co-workers and his family. "I had something to prove," he says. "I set high expectations for myself; I wanted to prove that I was capable of being there."

When Jamie returned to work, he set two goals for himself: pick up right where he left off and not accept defeat, in any sense of the word. He achieved his goals, and earned his Parts Technician certificate.

In 2005, Jamie stumbled upon a job advertisement for paid on-call Firefighters with the Yellowknife Fire Department (YKFD). Jamie entered the recruitment competition and was successful. After working along-side members of the fire department, who are also all Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), he decided this was a career he wanted to pursue.

"If **safety** was everyone's **top priority,** we wouldn't need second chances."

As a young boy, Jamie had no aspiration to be a Firefighter or EMT. However, he will admit that his career change is more than a coincidence. "I was given a second chance," Jamie says with a smile. He credits the quick action and training of EMTs with possibly saving his life. "I'd like to think that now I'll have the opportunity to give someone and their family the second chance that I was once afforded." Jamie attended the Emergency Services Academy in Sherwood Park, Alberta. He was elected class President for the fire recruit class and graduated in June 2006. After graduating he continued to work in Yellowknife as a Parts Technician, so he could save enough money for the next step in his career change. He later returned to the Emergency Services Academy to obtain his EMT-Ambulance (EMT-A) certificate. Jamie has since received his certificate, and hopes to be recruited by the YKFD for a full time position.

To say workplace safety is an important part of Jamie's life would be an understatement. He has made a career out of it. Although it plays a big role in his life now, he regrets that it took a near death experience to understand its importance. But if Jamie has learned anything during his recovery it's that life is too short; every action has a consequence. "If safety was everyone's top priority, we wouldn't need second chances." WSCC

Congratulations Jamie. The WSCC recently heard you reached your goal and now hold a full time position with the YKFD. We wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

NOT number

for workers under 25 who refuse to be another injury statistic

Most commonly injured young worker body parts:

- Hands: 30%
- Backs: 11%
- Eyes: 10%

Industries with the highest percentage of young worker injuries:

- Accommodation, Food and Entertainment: 29%
- Retail: 28%
- General Construction: 21%
- Authorities (i.e.: Municipalities, First Nation and Band Operations): 11%

Wanna get your hands on something built just for the young worker who raids your fridge and chills on your couch? With an average of 455 young workers injured each year in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, it's clear we need to work together to educate northern young workers.

I Am Not a Number is a youth-focused campaign targeted to workers under 25 that drives home the message that workplace safety is important. At the centre of the campaign is an information booklet built with young workers in-mind using feedback from their posse. The booklet doesn't only talk about the gory details like the kid who lost a thumb to a chop saw or the one who fractured his leg by jumping into a creek while running from a bear. It also informs workers fresh to the work force, or changing work sites, about their rights as workers and different hazards they need know.

Want us to send you the booklet for your reference or to pass on to a young worker? No problem. It's full of cool stats and shocking true injuries that happen right here in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Want to enrol new workers or your teenager in a free safety course? No, really, our Workplace Safety, Safety and the Young Worker course is totally free. Just contact the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission at 1-800-661-0792. Wicked.
WSCC

SKILLS COMPÉTENCES CANADA
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Traditional Knowledge...

The WSCC is a proud sponsor of the annual Territorial Skills Canada Competitions in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

For more information on workplace safety, please contact the WSCC.

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What *WE* Can Do:

JOB SEARCH ASSISTANCE

Workplace injuries seriously impact workers' lives. Injured workers have to adjust to being unable to work and also deal with new physical challenges and limitations as a result of their injuries. This can make it difficult for workers to move forward and return to the workforce. With the WSCC's Job Search Assistance program, injured workers can get on the path to make that happen.

Even though some injured workers are able to work, they may not be able to go back to their pre-injuries job. Some workers risk re-injury if they return to their old job, while other workers' injuries may prevent them from doing their old jobs. Workers in these situations may qualify for Job Search Assistance.

"The Job Search Assistance Program is one of many programs the WSCC offers through its Vocational Rehabilitation Initiative," says Colleen Desjardins, a WSCC Case Manager. "The ultimate goal of the program is to return an injured worker to meaningful employment."

When a worker qualifies for the Job Search Assistance Program, they work with a vocational rehabilitation counsellor. The counsellor and the

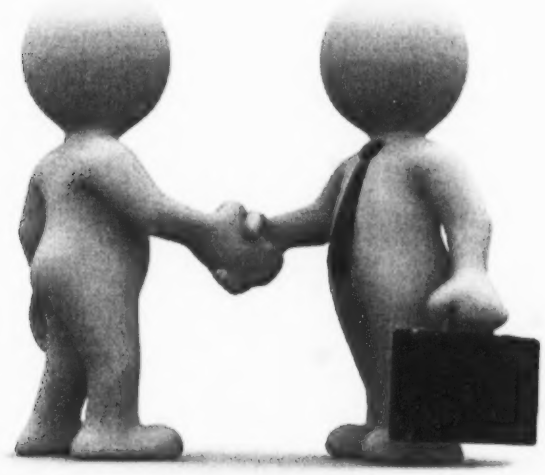
worker develop the worker's resume writing and job seeking skills as well as identify employment leads. The worker then starts a job search on a full-time basis. While the workers continue the job search, they are eligible for wage loss benefits equivalent to their disability payments. This means the WSCC will pay workers their disability payments while they are on their hunt for their new job, for up to 13 weeks. This assistance ends when a worker finds a new job, the job search period is over, or the worker stops actively looking for work.

Workers face challenges when they rejoin the workforce after an injury. Some workers spent many years in their old jobs and then are in unfamiliar territory. Writing resumes, following up on job leads, and prepping for interviews can be overwhelming. Having to deal with this on top of the physical adjustment from the injury can be a big blow to a workers' confidence in returning to work.

"There definitely are challenges that injured workers face when they are ready to go back to work," says Desjardins. "The Commission acknowledges this and works with the Vocational Rehabilitation Counsellor to minimize the impact of these challenges on workers during the job search process."

With challenges also comes success as Ms. Desjardins is quick to point out. "The Job Search Assistance Program is a proven success. Once involved in the program, a worker's focus tends to shift from the injury to securing meaningful employment. Workers are often successful in finding work with a wage that is comparable to what they earned before the injury. The end result is a happy worker who is satisfied to be back at work. We're also happy because we helped the worker make this transition."

To learn more about who qualifies for the Job Search Assistance Program, contact a WSCC Case Manager in Claims Services. WSCC



SKILLS COMPÉTENCES CANADA NUNAVUT

is the Skills of Today

The WSCC is a proud sponsor of the annual Territorial Skills Canada Competitions in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

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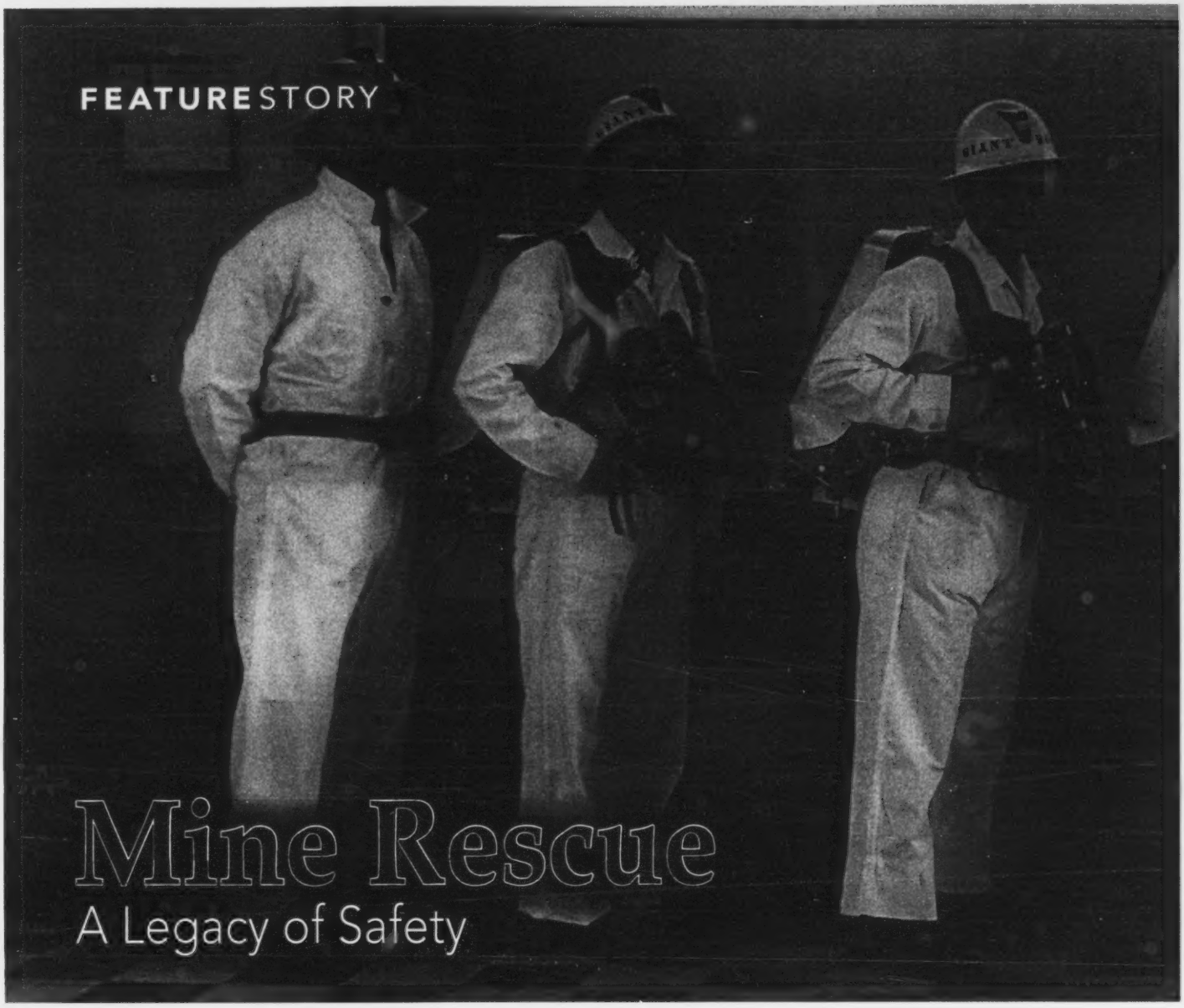


Mine Rescue

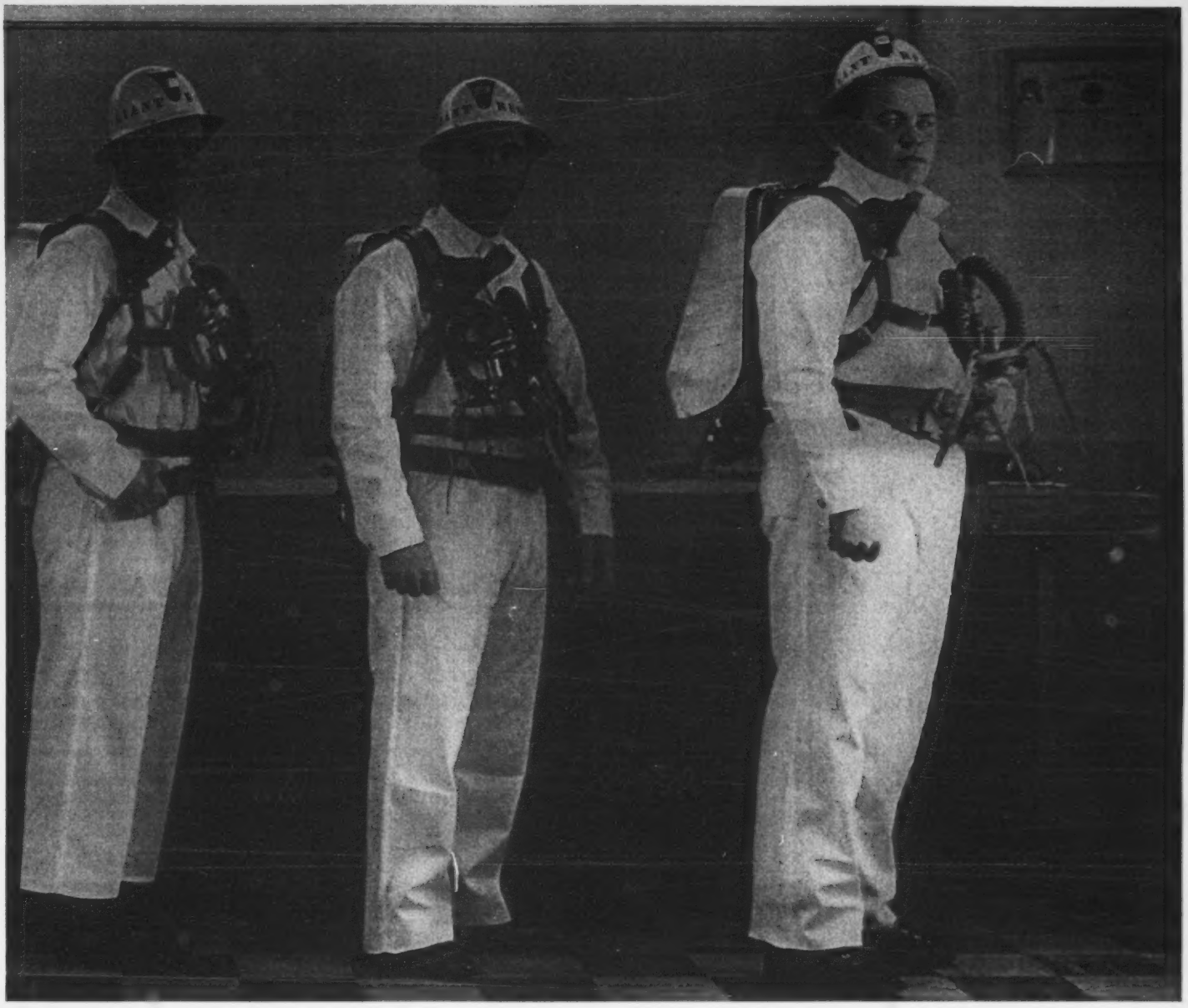
A Legacy of Safety

"... The trapped miners had built a wall with wood block fillers to seal the drift. They plastered the wood blocks with ditch slime and were sitting behind it... We knocked on the wood blocks and they screamed and rapped back that they were okay..."

He takes us through the rescue operation with an air of confidence and exactness. Details come to him easily and you can tell he is back in that exact moment when they found the four missing miners caught in the burning mine. His passion and dedication to mine rescue is written all over his face. It's also in his voice and listening to him you would never guess he is describing an event that happened decades ago.

A dedicated miner for over twenty years, William Powless was also a proud member of an exceptional mine rescue team at Giant Mine located just outside of Yellowknife.

The event Powless describes happened at the No Cash Mine in the Keno Hill Mining district in central Yukon. By the time his team was notified of the incident, there were already two casualties. Powless and his team were airlifted to the scene where they found smoke pouring out of the main mine entrance. Because the mine was built



on a mountain, the team entered from the other side through an adit (tunnel) down to the shaft.

"... We used the stretcher as a tool box to carry everything. We were strapped together with a rope lead and started moving forward," explains Powless.

Together, the team pressed deeper into the mine monitoring oxygen levels as they went. They carried flame safety lamps and if the flame dropped below a certain level, conditions were unsafe and they would retreat. While this technology might seem primitive by today's standards, it got the job done none-the-less.

When they located the trapped miners, Powless describes a sense of relief, "A lot of times when you're training and training you think you may never use it but that made everything worth while."

Powless was part of the first ever Northwest Territories and Nunavut mine rescue competition held in 1957. His team went home with the gold.

News of the North on September 12, 1957 describes the problem they solved as the following:

"... A fire had broken out in the Battery Charging station on the 1250 foot level of a mine, two men reported the fire by telephone from the lunch room where they were trapped... The task was to extinguish the fire and bring the two men out. The problem was further

Excerpts from an interview with Kate Bruce, a past Miramar Mine Rescue Team Member.

Q: There weren't a lot of women working in mining when you started in the 80s. What was that like?

A: I knew there weren't very many women but it wasn't an issue. I liked it and had the opportunity so I went for it. I started at an exploration camp and there were no other girls at the camp. I couldn't use the bathroom during shift change. I had a red and white bandanna that I tied around the bathroom door handle to let them know I was in there. I was always told to hurry up because someone might need to use it.

Q: How did you get on the Mine Rescue Team?

A: I wanted to try for the competitive team but typically, it is not your choice. The team gets together and they decide who is on and who gets the invite. I didn't wait to be asked. I asked them to put me on the team. They couldn't dispute the fact that I was good at gases and the technical part of things. I was put on the team as the number three and that was in 2001.

Q: What was it like being the rookie on the team?

A: Like any other rookie... I wasn't called by my name. I was called rookie and when you're a rookie you have to buy the team lunch. I took them to the Black Knight (in Yellowknife) and it cost me an arm and a leg. There were some big eaters on the team.

Q: How does it make you feel being one of the first women to compete in a Northwest Territories and Nunavut Mine Rescue competition?

A: I'm glad I did it. I'm glad I pushed for it. I hope it made people realize that you don't have to wait for an invitation. If you can truly do it, you have the right to go for it.

Q: Was your position on the team ever challenged?

A: Winning the territorial competition (in Yellowknife) was the first step. That got us to the western nationals. There was discussion whether I should be replaced by someone more experienced. I argued that I pulled my weight. Having me on the team, as a girl, allowed the guys not to partake in the he-man macho part of the contest. I think they were glad for it. You just left the guy and girl stuff behind. I was a good number three.

Q: What is your most memorable Mine Rescue moment?

A: It was when we were at the banquet at Fernie for the western national competition. The lights were low and they were announcing all the event winners. All of a sudden it went quiet and everyone was waiting. We were so tired and just sitting there waiting. Then... the announcer said in a really quiet voice... "The winner of underground overall is..." and in a long breath out... "Miramar." No one on the team got up. We were just looking at each other. It was like a time warp. We were considered the underdogs and everyone felt sorry for us. We were the country cousins.

Q: What do you miss the most about Mine Rescue?

A: I miss the camaraderie of working with the guys and doing the training. Some of it was very scary but we were doing it together. And... I miss the adrenaline rush when you go on autopilot. It confirmed that you had trained well and did it right.

Q: Why do you think mine rescue is so important?

A. Because when you go underground there is an inherent risk in what we do – because of where we go, what we do, what we use... We are defying what nature wants and to do that introduces risks that are out of our control. We can put in place skilled people to react when the unexpected happens.

Kate currently works as an Instructor of Mines at Aurora College in Yellowknife. She remains actively involved in Mine Rescue.

complicated by the fact that the men were not in the lunch room when the rescue team arrived there..."

Annual mine rescue competitions provide miners with a forum to tackle hypothetical problems following mine rescue principles. According to research compiled by Ryan Silk, a mining historian and employee with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut Chamber of Mines, the history of mine rescue in the North links back to the first years following World War II.

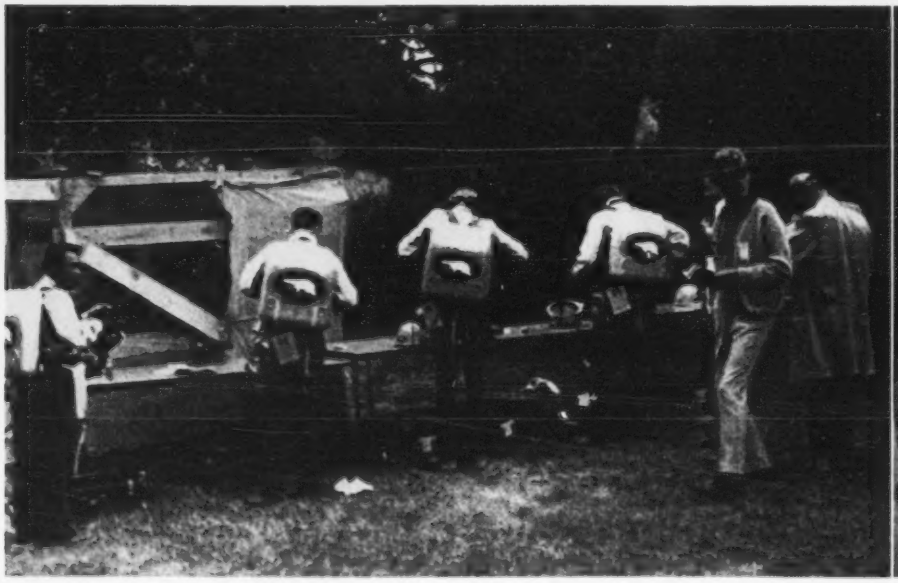
In 1947, local government administration and mine representatives came together to create the Safety Council. This new organization was responsible for purchasing the first mine rescue gear in the area: fourteen Chemox apparatuses (known to the layperson as oxygen breathing machines). Two years later, the Safety Council successfully lobbied government to fund the construction of a mine rescue station in the capital city. By 1950, the station was open for business. Located where the Side Door Youth Centre currently resides in downtown Yellowknife, it consisted of a two-bay garage housing an ambulance, classrooms, offices, and storage facilities.

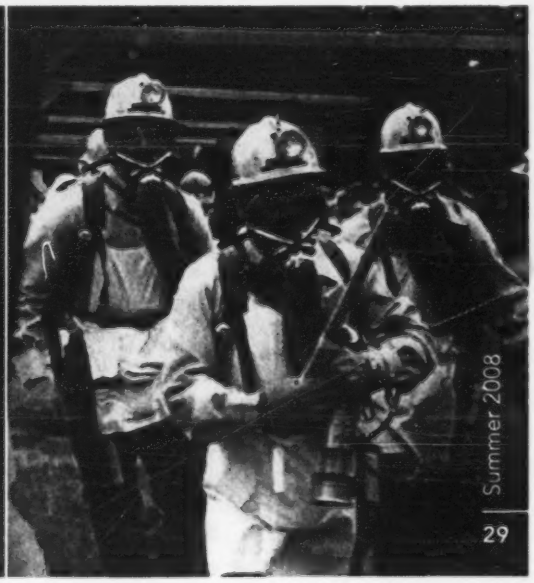
First managed by Mine Rescue Superintendent, Fred Dunn, Silk explains the initial goal was training followed by practice, practice, and more practice. "There weren't organized teams the first few years. It took some training to get teams ready," says Silk. "In 1956, they set up the first obstacle course, which was a friendly try-out. Four teams took part: Discovery, Con, Giant, and Port Radium. It was a practice."

Powless remembers, "When I started at Giant Mine our practices were at the mine rescue station and we were shown how to use an oxygen breathing machine, how to maintain it, and check the pressures."

Volunteer members make up mine rescue teams. Donating their time, the team undergoes rigorous training to prepare for the unknown. The hardest part for Powless was keeping track of all the theoretical gas concentrations. "It was the memorization for the testers you had to carry for all the situations you might encounter. You would mark on the map you carried where the safety lamp flame goes out. You would

Working together is an essential component of **mine rescue** and as a result, team members develop close **friendships**.





have a bunch of testers and you had to memorize lethal concentrations."

Almost 25 years later, underground air quality continued to be a primary focus of mine rescue training. Retired Giant and Con miner and past mine rescue team member, Robert Pellerin explains, "We'd get familiar with breathing equipment, fire fighting procedures, and gain knowledge about the gases underground – how to deal with them, how to detect them, and what equipment to use."

Mine rescue training doesn't stop at theory; there's also a heavy practical component. Pellerin shares one experience of a hands-on exercise forever burnt in his memory. "We were doing training at Giant. We were in a house filled with non-toxic smoke that was really irritating and one of the guys panicked. He was trying to tear his way out with his bare hands. We eventually got him out the window. The look on that man's face was pure terror."

Over the years, mine rescue evolved to incorporate new elements like ground-fall rescue techniques and rope repelling. It wasn't just about smoke and fire anymore and for Pellerin, this proficiency proved extremely valuable. "We had to rescue a miner who fell down a 200-foot deep hole. We put our skills that we learnt with the fire department to practice," shares Pellerin of a real life rescue operation. "We worked together as a team and got him out after four hours. He was stuck in a four-foot wide hole. It was a good experience with a happy ending."

The current structure of mine rescue competitions has teams of six miners (plus coaches) completing the following tasks: a written test, the practical bench, the underground bench, first aid, fire, rope rescue, smoke, surface obstacle/ extrication, and underground obstacle. Each task challenges different mine rescue techniques with the universal objectives being finding and rescuing trapped or injured persons, protecting property from damage, and rehabilitating the affected area and rendering it safe again. At all times, the safety of the team is paramount.

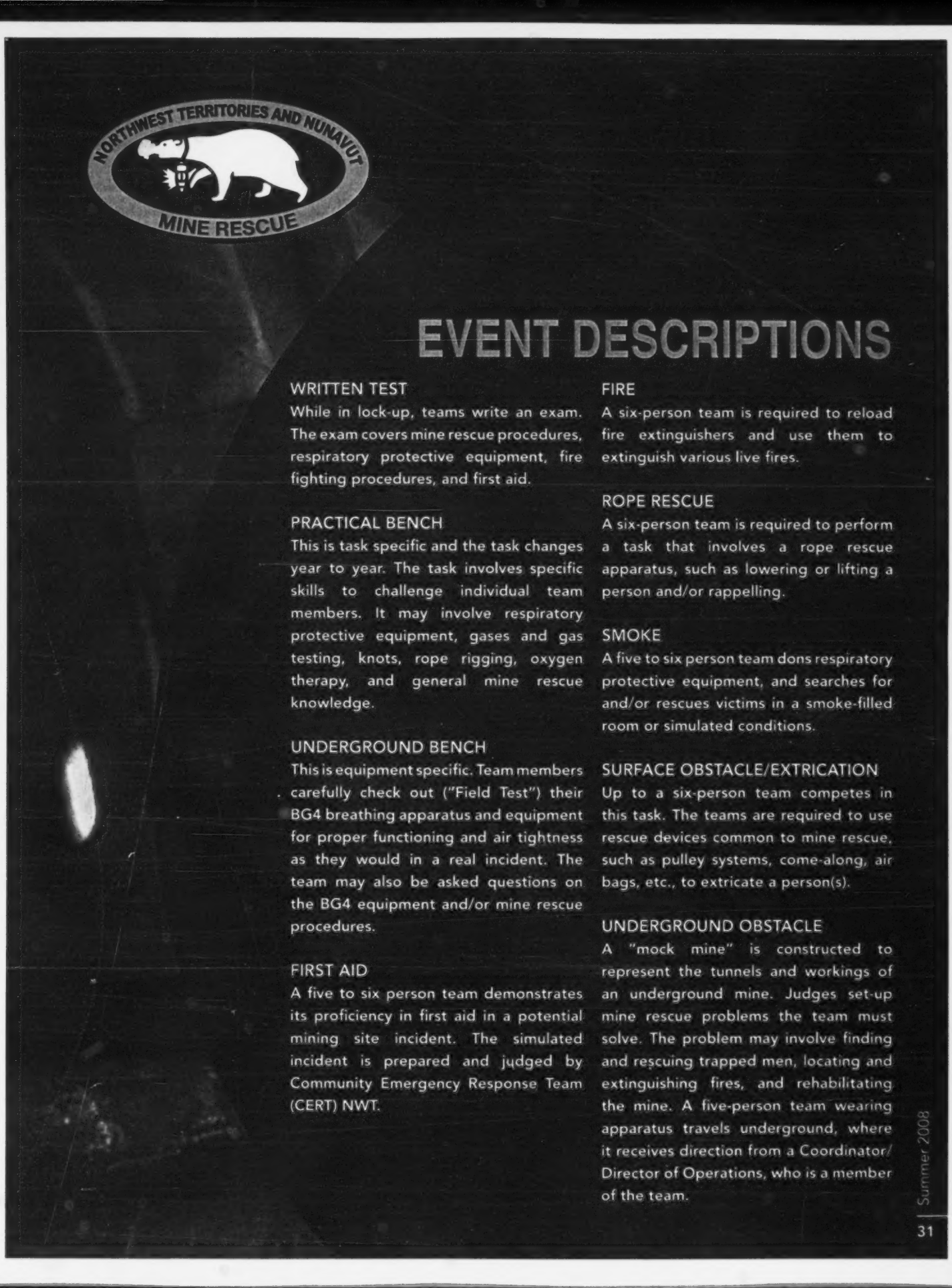
"It'd be like a curling team," explains Pellerin. "Everyone has to do his or her part. The Captain directs the team to perform different tasks."

Working together is an essential component of mine rescue and as a result, team members develop close friendships. Ties binding miners like Powless and Pellerin run deep. Despite entering mining decades apart, they both started at the Eldorado Mine in Uranium City in upper Saskatchewan, both followed opportunities North, and both joined mine rescue efforts citing the importance it plays in the industry.

"I think that every employee working underground should go through mine rescue," says Pellerin. "It makes you aware of the hazards, some you can't see, hear, or smell. It makes you a better and safer employee."

Powless agrees, adding his reason for joining the mine rescue team was simple, "Self preservation. I wanted to know the hazards and how to handle them and approach it. I was curious about the procedures to follow."

Now delegated to watching the annual competitions from the sidelines, one can't help but wonder if given the



EVENT DESCRIPTIONS

WRITTEN TEST

While in lock-up, teams write an exam. The exam covers mine rescue procedures, respiratory protective equipment, fire fighting procedures, and first aid.

PRACTICAL BENCH

This is task specific and the task changes year to year. The task involves specific skills to challenge individual team members. It may involve respiratory protective equipment, gases and gas testing, knots, rope rigging, oxygen therapy, and general mine rescue knowledge.

UNDERGROUND BENCH

This is equipment specific. Team members carefully check out ("Field Test") their BG4 breathing apparatus and equipment for proper functioning and air tightness as they would in a real incident. The team may also be asked questions on the BG4 equipment and/or mine rescue procedures.

FIRST AID

A five to six person team demonstrates its proficiency in first aid in a potential mining site incident. The simulated incident is prepared and judged by Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) NWT.

FIRE

A six-person team is required to reload fire extinguishers and use them to extinguish various live fires.

ROPE RESCUE

A six-person team is required to perform a task that involves a rope rescue apparatus, such as lowering or lifting a person and/or rappelling.

SMOKE

A five to six person team dons respiratory protective equipment, and searches for and/or rescues victims in a smoke-filled room or simulated conditions.

SURFACE OBSTACLE/EXTRICATION

Up to a six-person team competes in this task. The teams are required to use rescue devices common to mine rescue, such as pulley systems, come-along, air bags, etc., to extricate a person(s).

UNDERGROUND OBSTACLE

A "mock mine" is constructed to represent the tunnels and workings of an underground mine. Judges set-up mine rescue problems the team must solve. The problem may involve finding and rescuing trapped men, locating and extinguishing fires, and rehabilitating the mine. A five-person team wearing apparatus travels underground, where it receives direction from a Coordinator/ Director of Operations, who is a member of the team.

chance either would jump back in the ring. When asked to choose between being on the team or a coach, a smirk quickly swept across Powless' face. He didn't miss a beat answering, "I was more likely to be on the team than coaching... Coaches were considered over the hill."

To honour the achievements of miners like Powless and Pellerin, Ryan Silk is creating a photo record of mine rescue competitions. Silk began working on the project in 2007. "I started by focusing on who won each year. I used the newspapers for research. It has been a slow process but I am 90% finished," explains Silk. "There wasn't a very good record kept because it changed ownership over the years."

Coordination of the event has definitely bounced around. At the start, it was a group effort with Yellowknife area mines leading the way. It wasn't until several years later that the territorial government stepped in and took over the program. Presently, mine rescue falls under the jurisdiction of the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission's (WSCC) Prevention Service.

Dave Arthur, a Mine Inspector with the WSCC, is the Mine Rescue Coordinator. Arthur is responsible for organizing the event and explains the essential function it continues to serve, "Its role is to promote safety and assess how training is going at the mine sites. It's a means to measure the capabilities of teams."

As Powless and Pellerin explained, mine rescue training used to be centralized in one location and facilitated by the Mine Rescue Superintendent. Now, training is handled on-site at each mine. Mine rescue competitions are an excellent way to bring everyone together to evaluate progress and establish new goals for the coming year.

"It brings out all the skills that you train for throughout the year. The skills are used in a two-day event and it helps set-up a training scenario for the next year. You can work on the weak areas," says Pellerin.

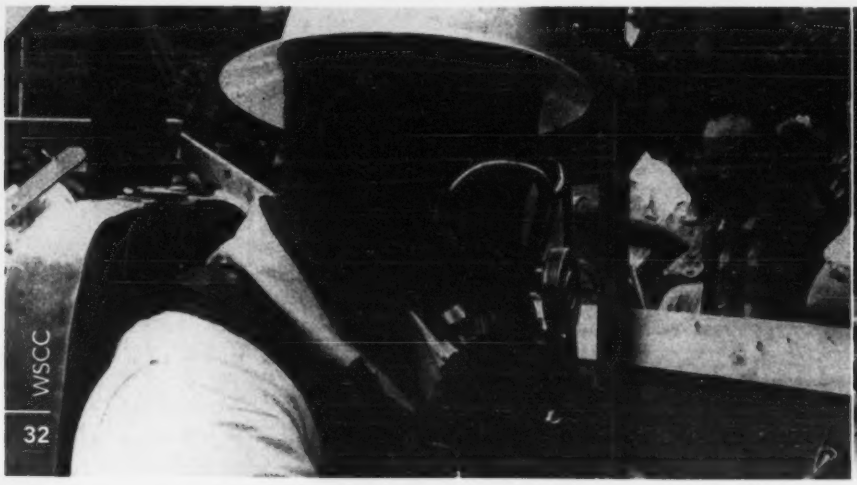
As a past mine rescue competitor and coach, Arthur appreciates his opportunity to remain connected to mine rescue, "I enjoy working with the guys and helping them improve their abilities. Major incidents are becoming less frequent which is definitely good but the downside is that managers and teams are getting less exposure to emergency situations, which makes you wonder if people are really prepared."

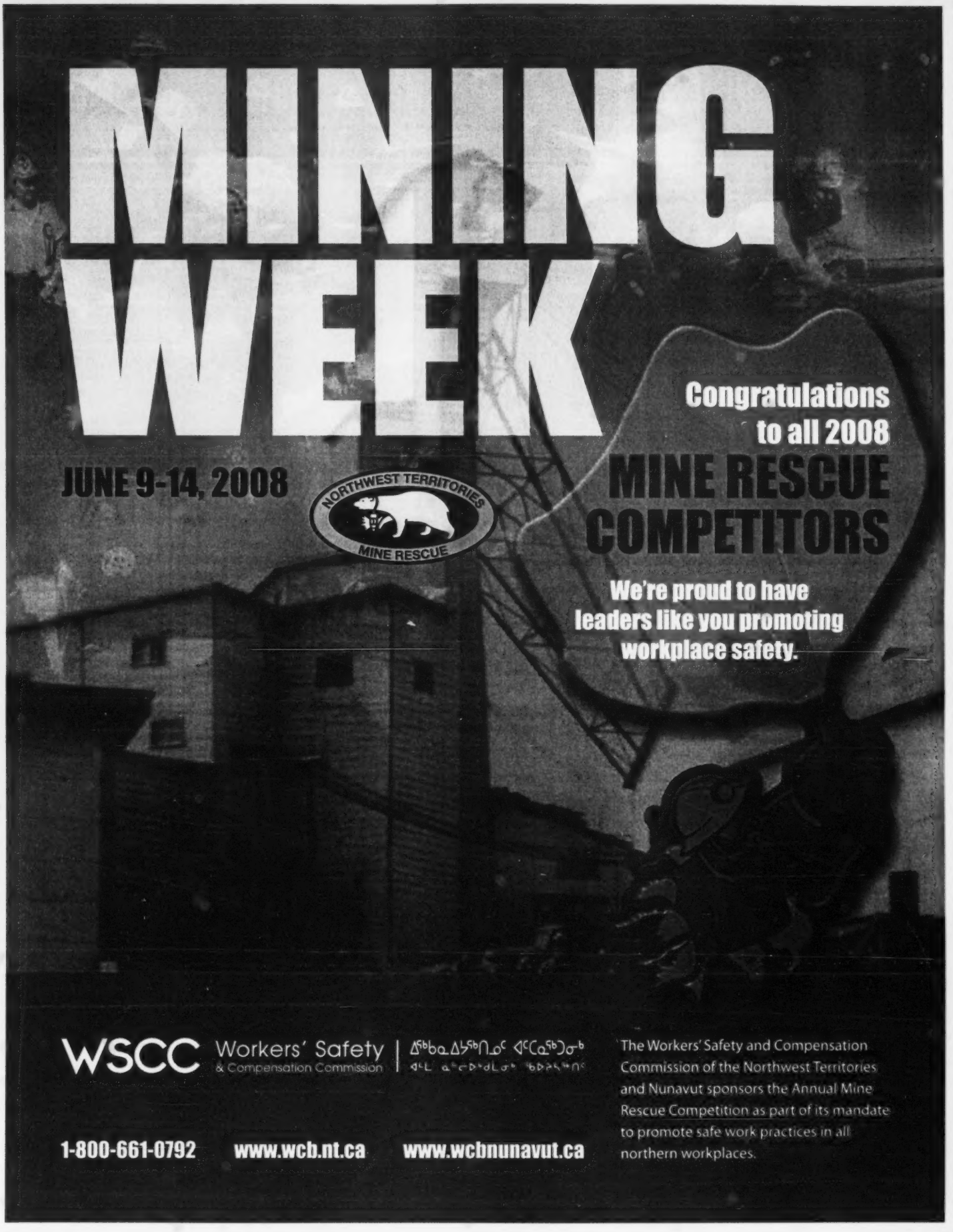
Statistically, our teams are on the right track. They consistently put in solid performances at the Western Regional Competitions held every second year in Fernie, BC. The event brings together representation from western Canadian provinces and northwestern United States. Out of seven competitions, northern teams have won three.

There are over 7,000 workers employed in the mining industry throughout the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. That's a lot of people to get home safely at the end of every day and mine rescue teams are committed to help make it happen. People like William Powless, Robert Pellerin, and Dave Arthur represent only a few of the many who deserve our respect and recognition for their contributions to building a tradition of high safety standards through mine rescue. WSCC

This article is dedicated to the memory of Robert Pellerin who passed away on May 26, 2008.

The WSCC is honored to have worked with Robert.




MINING WEEK
JUNE 9-14, 2008
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
MINE RESCUE
Congratulations to all 2008
MINE RESCUE COMPETITORS
We're proud to have leaders like you promoting workplace safety.
WSCC Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission
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www.wcb.nt.ca
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The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut sponsors the Annual Mine Rescue Competition as part of its mandate to promote safe work practices in all northern workplaces.

Right to

Refuse Unsafe Work

Do you know your rights? No, I don't mean your right to: life, liberty, and security; or, equal treatment before and under the law. Across Canada workers are granted rights designed to help keep workplaces safe. Workers have the right to:

- KNOW
- PARTICIPATE
- REFUSE UNSAFE WORK

These rights can keep you safe, if you know how to use them. Keep reading to find out how to put your rights right where they should be, into action!

RIGHT TO KNOW

Many workplace hazards are so familiar to us that we forget how harmful they can really be. We wouldn't think twice if we were asked to change the toner in our printer, or carry a heavy box down a set of stairs. Truth is both of these tasks present workplace hazards. If you are not aware of what could happen it can put you and others at risk.

What it means: You have the right to know about the hazards in your workplace. It's your employer's responsibility to identify the hazards that you and your co-workers may come in contact with, as well as how you should deal with them.

Putting your rights to work:

- Don't be afraid to ask questions, or ask for additional training. You need the right tools to do your job properly.
- Read your safety manual and procedures. Be aware of your responsibilities, and safety expectations.
- Learn how to identify hazards and report them to your supervisor; it is the first step to staying safe.
- Remember to listen. Yes, knowing about the hazards in your workplace is your right, but it's also your responsibility.
- Follow the rules, don't take short cuts. Safety means you can't cut corners.

RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

Workplace health and safety is a partnership between workers and their employers. Safety is everyone's responsibility.

What it means: You have the right to be involved in decisions that affect the health and safety in your workplace. You can participate through a safety representative, or join your Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Committee.

Putting your rights to work:

- Report any hazards or unsafe work conditions to your supervisor.
- Encourage co-workers to follow safety rules and procedures.
- Join your workplace OH&S Committee. Get involved.

RIGHT TO REFUSE UNSAFE WORK

As part of the Internal Responsibility System, you and your co-workers are responsible to notify your supervisor/employer of any hazards or unsafe work conditions you may see. Reporting a hazard can save a life.

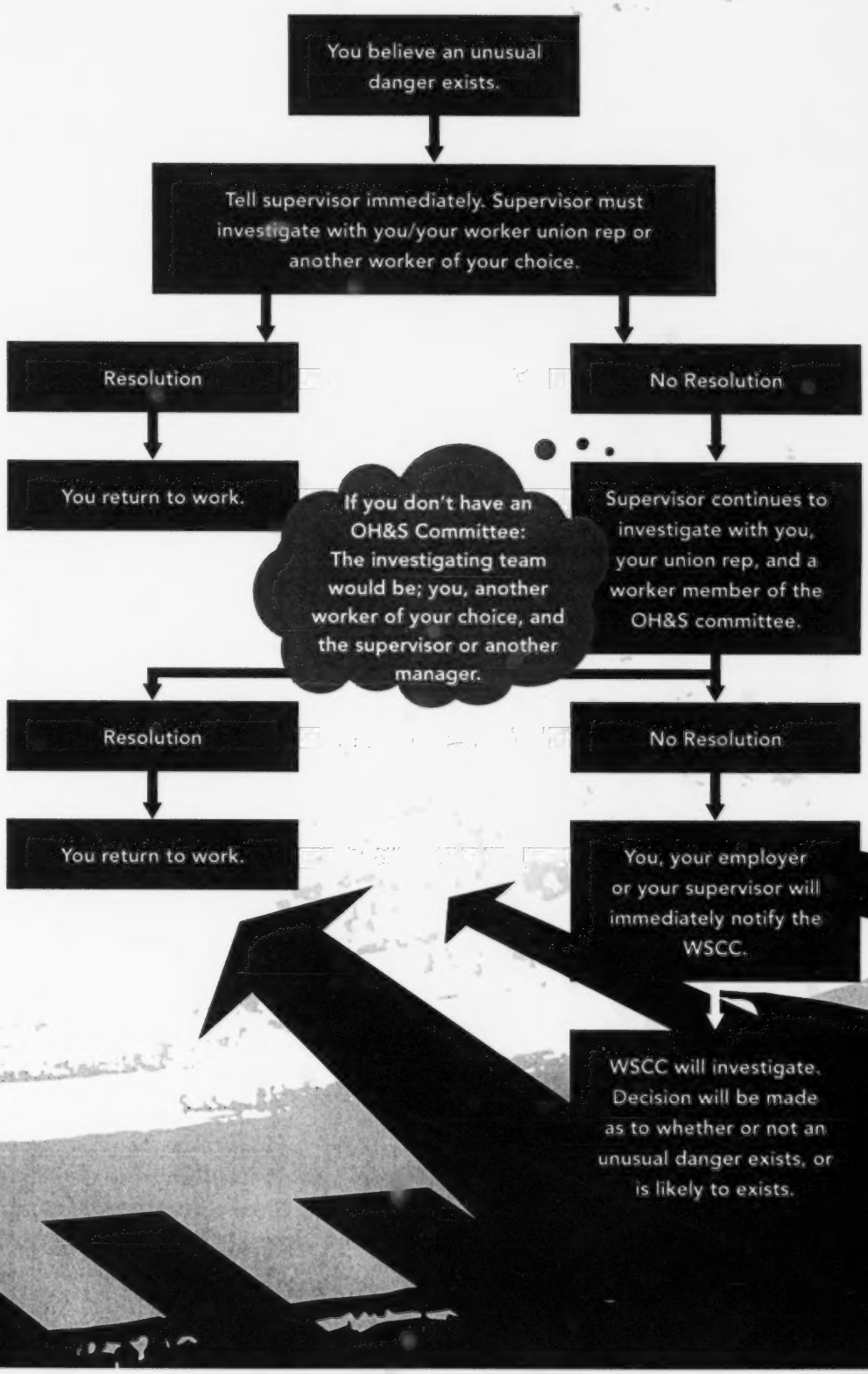
What it means: Saying no to your boss is never easy. But, you may refuse work if you have reasonable grounds to believe that: an unusual danger exists; that carrying out the work will create an unusual danger; or, the operations or use of a tool may cause an unusual danger. This right is granted to you under the *Safety Act*, which means you are protected by law.

Putting your rights to work:

- Trust your gut. If something doesn't feel or look right tell your supervisor.
- Explain why you believe the work is unsafe; you can't just walk off the job.
- Remember you do not have to return to that task until you:
  - have received proper training; or,
  - the equipment is fixed or replaced; or,
  - you're given the tools to do it safely.

Take your safety into your own hands. Know your rights and use them to keep you and your workplace safe.
WSCC

Unsafe Work Refusal Process


You believe an unusual danger exists.
Tell supervisor immediately. Supervisor must investigate with you/your worker union rep or another worker of your choice.
Resolution
No Resolution
You return to work.
If you don't have an OH&S Committee: The investigating team would be; you, another worker of your choice, and the supervisor or another manager.
Supervisor continues to investigate with you, your union rep, and a worker member of the OH&S committee.
Resolution
No Resolution
You return to work.
You, your employer or your supervisor will immediately notify the WSCC.
WSCC will investigate. Decision will be made as to whether or not an unusual danger exists, or is likely to exists.

WHATCHU TALKIN' 'BOUT WHMIS?

The 80s brought us indispensable things like legwarmers, fluorescent colours, acid wash jeans, Flashdance, and unforgettable TV stars like Gary Coleman from Different Strokes.

Advancements were not limited to pop culture. The immortalized decade of big hair bands also saw the evolution of safety standards to new levels. In 1988, the Canadian Federal Government passed Workplace Hazardous Management Information System (also known as WHMIS) legislation.

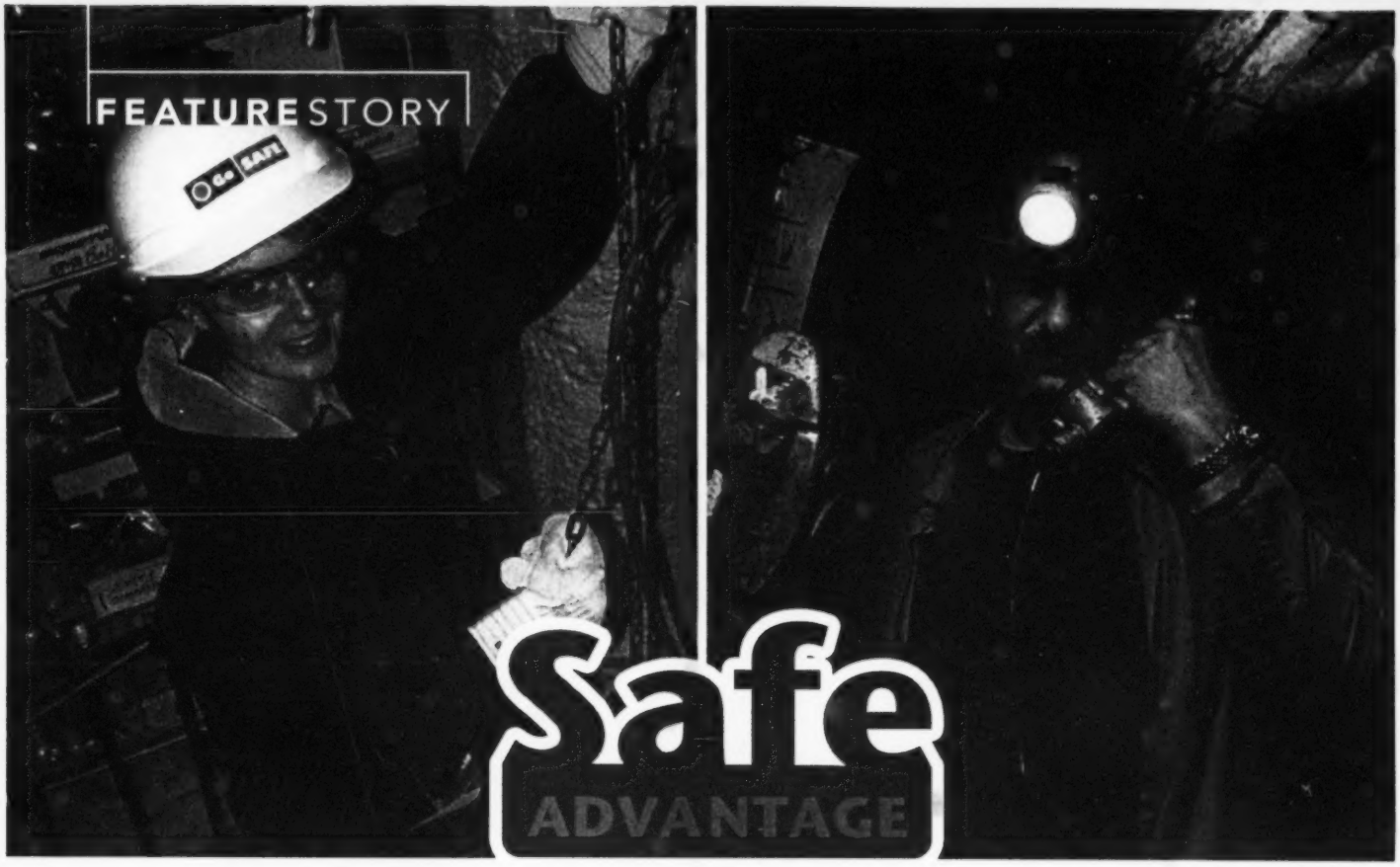
Workers have the right to know what hazardous materials are in their workplace and how to protect themselves when handling them. WHMIS makes this right undisputable law. People who do not follow WHMIS can be charged with an offence and if convicted, fined or jailed.

WHMIS responsibilities fall on the shoulders of suppliers, employers, and workers alike. Suppliers must disclose the contents of, and properly label, materials. Employers must provide safe handling guidelines of hazardous materials and train workers appropriately. Workers must ensure they always use the system properly.

There are three main parts to WHMIS:

- Labels telling workers product dangers and where to learn more about them. WHMIS uses eight standard symbols to tell you what type of hazard the material may present.
- Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) containing detailed information on dangers associated with materials and proper handling.
- Worker education providing instructions on how to use WHMIS, what hazardous materials are found in the workplace, and proper handling. The law clearly states that employers must provide site-specific WHMIS training and review annually.

The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission offers free WHMIS training. The course is a great way to learn the basics. For more information, call 1-800-661-0792.
WSCC



SAFE ADVANTAGE:
The Mechanics

SAFETY PAYS is the program's slogan and for many northern employers who saw money flowing back into their pockets, it couldn't be more right!

The Safe Advantage program of the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC) completed its first full-year cycle this June. Reflecting on the past twelve months, this evolving program delivered on its Mission to promote workplace safety though financial accountability and fairness.

The driving forces behind Safe Advantage are northern employers. The message they sent to the WSCC in recent years was loud and clear. A few bad apples shouldn't spoil the entire basket. Employers must be accountable for driving up assessment rates if they have poor health and safety management practices and unreasonably high claims experience costs.

Large employers are responsible for 50% of all WSCC new claim costs. For that reason, Safe Advantage speaks directly to them. The program currently targets employers with average assessments above $40,000 over the last three years. In real numbers that's around 100 companies generating over $2.2 million dollars in new claim costs.

Safe Advantage stresses the basic principles that keeping worksites safe and getting injured workers back to work as soon as it's safe to do so are sound business investments, with potentially high returns. Just ask the employers who recently found nice WSCC cheques in their hands! This financial incentive program rewards Safe Advantage employers with proven health and safety management practices, and low claims experience costs. Those employers who fall short of Safe Advantage standards are required to pay penalties.

Safe Advantage Cycle

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE

The lifecycle of Safe Advantage is an annual process. First, we identify the year's Safe Advantage employers based on average assessment rates over the last three years. Qualifying employers receive a Safe Advantage package, which includes the Management Practices Questionnaire.

The Management Practices Questionnaire provides the WSCC with a written assessment of employers' prevention and return-to-work programs. This is a program cornerstone; only employers that pass the questionnaire may be eligible for refunds. The questionnaire has two sections and each part is rated separately. To earn a pass, a minimum rating of 70% is required for each section.

The prevention section evaluates an employer's health and safety program. The return-to-work section evaluates how an employer reintroduces injured workers to safe and productive employment, as soon as medically possible, to minimize wage loss.

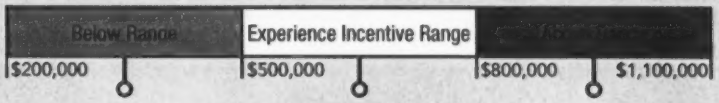
Employers must submit completed questionnaires to the WSCC by a specific date in early fall. The WSCC reviews the questionnaires and notifies failing employers of their status. The Management Practices Questionnaire is also a helpful tool for employers establishing health and safety benchmarks and evaluating internal progress. Workplace health and safety is an active concept and the WSCC gives employers adequate time to correct deficiencies. In December, the WSCC distributes a second Management Practices Questionnaire to employers who failed the first time around. It's about second chances, and giving employers an opportunity to highlight steps they've taken to improve their safety and return-to-work programs.

QUESTIONNAIRE VERIFICATION

The next stage of the Safe Advantage cycle is Questionnaire Verification. In January, our Safe Advantage Coordinator begins work with WSCC inspectors and other staff to confirm questionnaire results and verify prevention and return-to-work responses. Verification may include, but is not limited to, employee and management interviews, site observations, and document reviews.

CLAIMS EXPERIENCE COSTS ANALYSIS

Along with the Management Practices Questionnaire, the other foundation block of the Safe Advantage program is the Claims Experience Costs Analysis. An employer's claims experience costs are all costs paid in the previous year for injuries that occurred anytime within the past three years. These costs are measured against an experience incentive range to determine if they are reasonable, exceptionally high, or exceptionally low. The reasonable range depends on the employer's average assessment and allows for reasonable variation in costs before either a refund or penalty kicks in. Sounds complicated right. Here is an example of how it works:



Scenario #1
Company A's claims experience costs for 2007 are $350,000. Company A falls below the experience incentive range. Company A is eligible for a potential refund.

Scenario #2
Company A's claims experience costs for 2007 are $700,000. Company A falls within the experience incentive range. Company A is not eligible for a refund nor is it required to pay a penalty.

Scenario #3
Company A's claims experience costs for 2007 are $850,000. Company A falls above the experience incentive range. Company A is required to pay an automatic claims experience penalty.

Like the average assessment rates, the WSCC calculates claims experience costs based on the normal 12-month calendar year running from January to December. Each year's numbers are available just prior to the final step in the Safe Advantage program.

RESULTS

June marks the end and the beginning of the Safe Advantage cycle. Safe Advantage employers can expect a Results Package from the WSCC. The package includes either a refund cheque or an invoice based on the employer's overall results. The following chart highlights the five potential results a Safe Advantage employer can have:

Superior Claims Experience Costs & Proven Health and Safety Management Practices	Refund
Superior Claims Experience Costs & Poor Health and Safety Management Practices	Forfeit Refund
Claims Experience Costs Within Incentive Range	Neutral
Poor Claims Experience Costs & Proven Health and Safety Management Practices	Automatic Claims Experience Penalty
Poor Claims Experience Costs & Poor Health and Safety Management Practices	Automatic Claims Experience Penalty + Management Practices Penalty

To get things rolling for the next rotation, qualifying employers will also receive a new Management Practices Questionnaire in their results package. Employers are required to complete a new questionnaire each year.

The number of qualified Safe Advantage employers changes year to year. Just because an employer qualifies for the program one year, doesn't guarantee they'll be in it the next time around. The deciding factor is your average assessment rates over the past three years. Also, employers that weren't under the Safe Advantage umbrella one year, might find coverage another year.

To help northern employers understand the mechanics driving Safe Advantage, the WSCC is committed to visiting all eligible Safe Advantage employers by the end of 2008. A team of WSCC representatives began this process last fall. During these visits, employers are presented with their specific Safe Advantage profile, and the program is broken down using real numbers and scenarios.

Safe Advantage is about building partnerships. Its success to date is due to employer cooperation. Working together, Safe Advantage companies and the WSCC can eliminate work related injuries, and help northerners work safe every day.

If employers would like more information on Safe Advantage, they are encouraged to call the WSCC at 1-800-661-0792.
WSCC

CAN YOU SPOT THE SAFETY HAZARDS?

Go SAFE the Safety Game

Play the Safety Game and learn how to GO SAFE! Work through five worksites identifying and fixing hazards.

To get your FREE interactive CD, contact the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission.

1.800.661.0792

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Go SAFE

LACERATIONS

Cuts, lacerations, gashes, slashes, slices, avulsions, puncture, and penetration wounds... what do these all have in common? **Think red...** They are all bloody and all preventable workplace injuries.

The events leading up to these injuries vary and inexperience plays a significant role in many. Workers under 25 are prone to this type of injury and account for 25% of all cut and laceration claims.

THE CASE

A young worker was using a meat-cutting machine in a deli when he heard a noise behind him. He turned around to see where the noise was coming from. The worker lost his focus and cut his finger on the machine blade.

The young worker reported the incident to the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC). The WSCC opened a claim. The worker missed six days of work due to his injuries.

DOING IT RIGHT!

Cut and laceration injuries are not going away. In fact, the number of cut and laceration claims is increasing. The year 2007 saw 14% growth from the previous year and 6% growth compared to the five-year average.

Here are some helpful tips to reduce your risk of injury:

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.

As a worker, one of your essential workplace rights is the right to know. You have the right to know how to do your job safely and to receive jobsite specific training. Make sure you know how to use workplace machines and equipment.

GOOD EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE & USE.

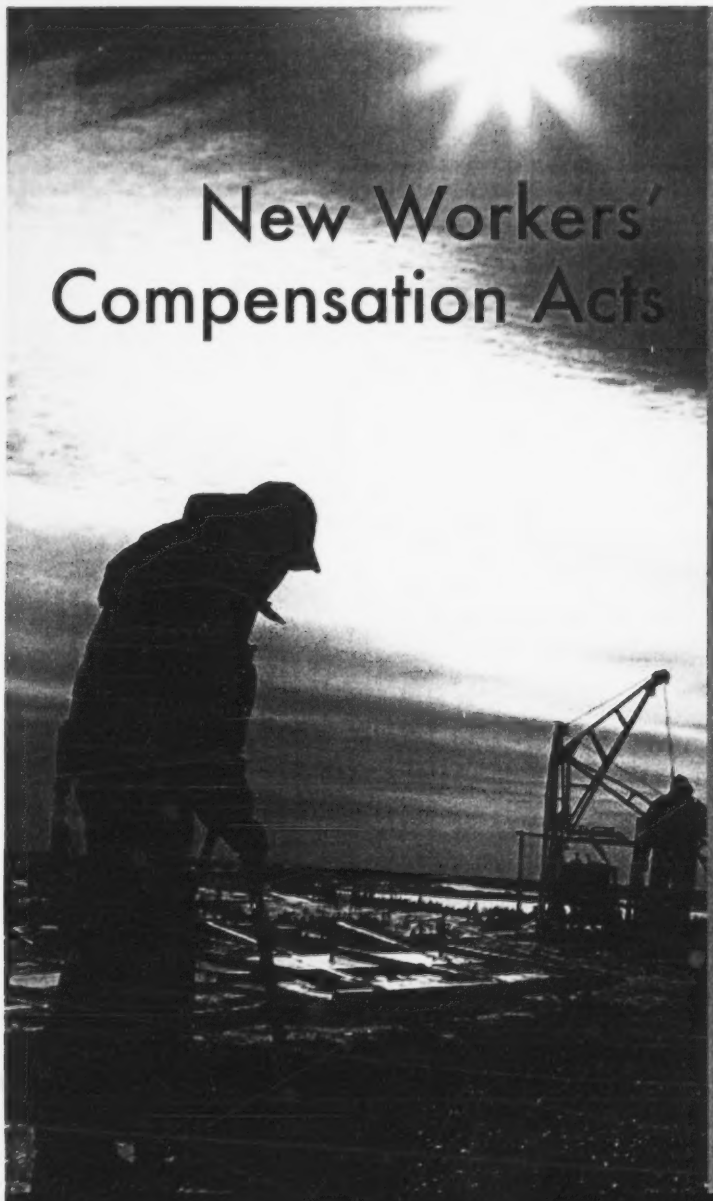
Before you start-using pieces of equipment or machinery, always make sure they are in good working order. If they require maintenance, DO NOT USE THEM and tell your supervisor immediately.

USE PREVENTATIVE EQUIPMENT.

Some machines have specific attachments designed to reduce the risk of injury. Examples of this are blade guards and power pedals. A blade guard protects operators' hands from oscillating blades while in use. There are varieties of blade guards. If you are not sure whether your machine has one and/or which one to use, ask your supervisor. Power pedals automatically stop machines when the operator walks away.

STAY FOCUSED.

Always pay attention to what you are doing and keep distractions to a minimum. Even small kitchen knives can inflict serious injury. WSCC



New Workers' Compensation Acts

Both the Northwest Territories and Nunavut legislatures recently passed new workers' compensation legislation. The new *Workers' Compensation Acts* have been in the works for several years. They are the second and final phase of changes recommended in the *Act Now* report, and represent several years of hard work, research, and extensive consultations.

Both the NWT *Workers' Compensation Act* and the Nunavut *Workers' Compensation Act* came into force on April 1, 2008.

The new *Acts* differ from the old *Acts* in a number of ways. Some of these changes include:

- A new name to better reflect what we do.
- A statement of purpose within the *Acts*.
- Clearer language and better organization.
- Structural changes to the Appeals Tribunal.
- Deadlines for Reviews and Appeals, and on Appeals Decisions.
- Discretion to provide partial lump sum payments for pensions with a disability rating greater than 10%.
- More flexibility to award benefits.
- Changing the definition of common law spouse.
- Increased benefits for surviving spouses.
- Allowing the Headquarters' location to change.

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